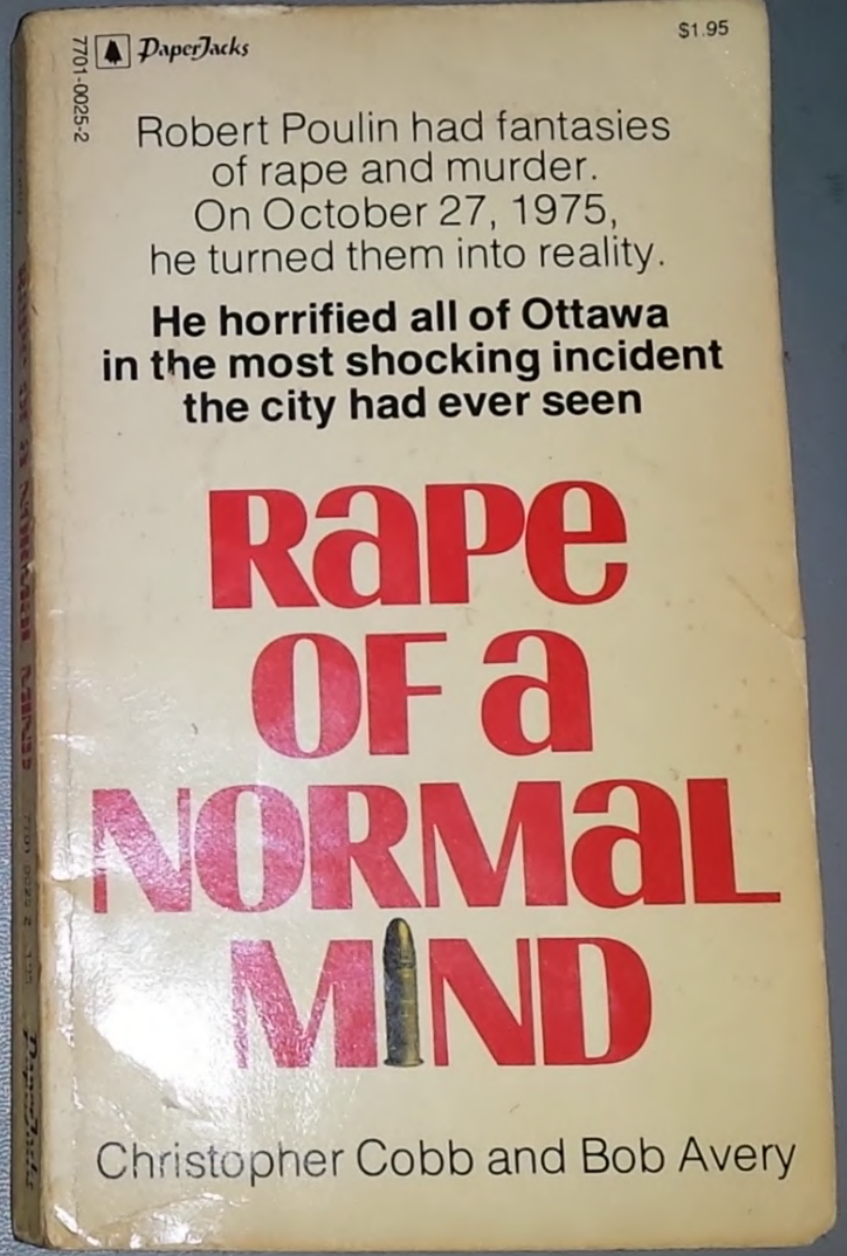
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Robert Poulin had fantasies
of rape and murder.
On October 27, 1975,
he turned them into reality.
He horrified all of Ottawa
in the most shocking incident
the city had ever seen
RAPE OF A NORMAL MIND
Christopher Cobb and Bob Avery

Dear Diary:

Today is April 7, 1975. . . . Recently I went up to Tim's Second Hand Bookstore and . . . found an ad for "Everything" Dolls. These are life-like dolls of a girl that has everything. . . . She costs $29.95, and I broke myself ordering her. Now I no longer think that I will have to rape a girl, and am unsure as to whether or not I will still commit suicide. . . .

Robert Poulin.

Robert Poulin changed his mind.

Trained by the militia in techniques of how to kill, frustrated by his "Everything" doll, lonely for company, and lost in his own fantasy world, the shy, eighteen-year-old boy finally snapped, shocking peaceful Ottawa into the realization that,

IF IT HAPPENED ONCE TO A "NORMAL" BOY, THEN IT COULD HAPPEN AGAIN AND AGAIN.

RAPE OF A NORMAL MIND

by Chris Cobb and
Bob Avery

PaperJacks LTD.

Markham, Ontario, Canada

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RAPE OF A NORMAL MIND

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Chris Cobb
Bob Avery

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SECTION ONE

A QUIET MONDAY

Chapter One

THE INCIDENT: Chance to Be a Hero

Girls were screaming and crying. Some of the guys were crying too. There was blood all over the floor.

—— Kevin Clarke, St. Pius X High School Grade-13 student

Nothing much ever happens in the quiet affluent life of Ottawa, or so they say. It's a government place, beautiful to look at, and much to the pleasure of the quarter-million population, one of Canada's more liveable cities. The nation's capital is certainly no Vancouver, Montreal, New York, or Toronto, because here, there is very little of the dirt and poverty that invariably goes hand-in-hand with the wealth of a large community.

Ottawa has been called a park with houses, and to the visitor, that might seem like a fairly accurate description. The residents are mainly bureaucrats, who desert the downtown core at the end of their nine-to-five working day and filter out into the suburbs to either high-rise apartment blocks or comfortable residential areas surrounded by well-cut lawns, flower gardens, and swimming pools. Many vigorous-minded people have considered the city boring and as evidence, cite the example of downtown main streets which, after seven o'clock at night, are invariably deserted. Ottawans don't particularly care though. The city, in graphic terms, moves with the

regularity of a normal heartbeat registering on a cardiogram, and they like it that way. Keep your factories, keep your hustle, and keep your swinging night life, they say. We like it here, just the way it is.

An office Monday, even in a city with the best of several worlds, is no different than anywhere else. The day approaches every week, with disturbing indifference towards the tens of thousands of civil servants who are enjoying their prized, almost religiously revered weekend of rest and recreation. Monday comes, it usually drags, and by the end of the day there is an atmosphere of optimistic relief at the prospect of only four more days to go before the weekend arrives again. Most Mondays will go down in Ottawa's communal memory with similar greyness. All except Monday, October 27, 1975 that is. That date is burned deep—very deep.

The cars were pouring out of the city as usual at the end of the working day. Everybody was intent on making the best of the Indian summer that was finally on the verge of giving way to the reality of autumn. Ottawa's citizens react with strange, almost computerized uniformity to the changing seasons because the weather dictates so much of the activities of life. From near-arctic in the winter to near-tropical in the summer, and little compromise in between.

The maple trees that give the city its unsurpassed, rustic beauty during the brief transition from summer to winter, had turned their browny-gold. But the sunshine remained. It was difficult to believe that in a matter of weeks, the thousands of cyclists that travel alongside the Ottawa waterways in summer and fall would soon be donning skates to take part in the capital's favourite winter pastime—ice-skating on the 150-year-old Rideau Canal. In this city of averages, the Rideau is a proud possession. At five miles long, it is the largest ice-skating surface in the world and along with the skiing resorts

high up in the surrounding Gatineau Hills, provide a great winter tourist attraction.

But on this October day, many of the motorists were still thinking in terms of outside barbecues as they headed home from their offices. The local French/English AM radio stations blared out through open car windows as the traffic streamed home. It should have been the end of a normal Monday workday and the start of a nice, pleasant suburban evening. But fate, for those who believe in it, had other plans, and the news that was about to hit those unsuspecting radio listeners would shock and stun the city more than any other single domestic event in its history. Robert Poulin had seen to that.

At first, the news came in flashes. Several students at a local high school had been shot during an afternoon religious class and as far as anyone knew, the gunman had died shortly afterwards. Whether there was more than one gunman, or more than one death, the reports didn't say. Nor did they reveal how many students were injured or how serious the injuries were. In fact the first superficial bits of information prompted more questions than they answered. St. Pius X High School had been the scene of the shootings, and the students had been sent home early because of all the commotion. Beyond that, the news reports were flimsy and contradictory.

Reporters from all parts of the city had rushed to the scene and arrived almost at the same time as the police. The habit most media have of listening in to the police radio, twenty-four hours a day, is strictly illegal, if information is acted upon. But it is tolerated to the extent that official call signs are made available to reporters for that purpose. Often, it is only sirens, flashing lights, and flexible adherence to speed limits in an emergency that enable police officers to get to the scene of a disaster or a sensational crime before the press corps. In any event, the time difference is usually slim.

While reporters and police were on their way to St. Pius, the school's switchboard was jammed with calls from anxious parents desperately trying to get news of their children. They were told calmly that the incident involved only one class of Grade-13 students, and that the number injured was small. For the parents with children in other grades, the anxiety was soon over, but for those with sons and daughters directly involved, it was only just beginning.

Police virtually cordoned off the sprawling school grounds and confined visitors and press to one small playground area at the side of the main building. The Grade-13 students were interviewed and allowed to leave the inside of the school, to be talked to again by the information-hungry journalists waiting outside. Television cameras, tape recorders, and notebooks were ready as the students drifted out, one by one, dazed from the stunning moments of shock that had hit them less than an hour before. They told their stories freely, unguardedly, and often just out of plain need to talk to someone about what had happened. The bits and pieces gradually came together and by that evening, what everyone thought to be the whole story was being told. In Ottawa, on the night of Monday, October 27, the topic of after-supper conversation was to be dictated by newscasts buzzing across the North-American continent and among nations throughout the world.

Early that afternoon, the students had been gathering inside classroom 71 of St. Pius X High School for their usual theology lesson. With typical Grade-13 attitude, many of the students had moved beyond the age when religious instruction meant a great deal to them, despite their Roman Catholic upbringing. The thoughts were there, but quite often the motivation for study had been replaced by other things, such as concentration on upcoming university places or jobs in the ever-more-competitive work force. Added to the social distractions

that beset most teenagers, the more practical aspects of life and survival had pushed the theory of religion down the list of priorities. But despite varying levels of interest, the class that day was large because students had to attend religious instruction at least once a week.

At about two o'clock, Father Robert Bedard started to talk to his students. As always, latecomers drifted in, causing the lesson to start and stop several times during the first few minutes. Father Bedard always paused to accommodate the interruption. .

In the casual, engaging manner that the priest assumed for his older students, he was talking in general philosophical terms about Jesus Christ and relating his teachings to the social problems of today's modern society. There was no reason to be down, nor was there any problem too big to tackle because those teachings were still around to help us, he explained. The message was getting across and the students' interest was rising, when once again the door opened. The tall, greying Father Bedard paused calmly, thinking that the seventy-ninth student of the afternoon was on his way in. Those who remember say it was about 2:20 P.M.

A few students turned their heads curiously, in the way many people do when a newcomer enters a room. Some were even a little annoyed at being interrupted at such a late stage in the lesson, but nevertheless, they waited . . . and waited. But there was no newcomer, and for a second or two it seemed as though the door had creaked open by itself or had been blown open by the breeze. For a second or two . . . .

A single foot appeared at the bottom of the doorway as though detached from a body, and those who had been absorbed in the lesson began to murmur to one another in frustration at the prolonged entry of their fellow student. Then they saw the long barrel of some kind of gun show itself a body's length above the exposed foot. Two hands, gripped and determined, were next, followed

by the sinister, glassy-eyed, smiling face of a youth out to kill. Robert Poulin—the quiet one—had snapped.

The cruelly apt analogy of Father Bedard's topic spun into confusion as girls and boys alike started screaming and crying in the face of shotgun pellets that spat at them, seemingly from all directions. The priest fell to the ground shouting for everyone to follow but many had already done so, pulling down their individual school desks for added protection against this crazed, unknown maniac who was out to kill them.

Within seconds, a peaceful, Monday-afternoon religious class had been transformed into a bloody, hideous scenario of panic and despair: seventy-eight students had been trapped by a killer. It was a Mafia revenge killing, a stupid mistake, or a crazy joke, some of them thought. The screams of the injured, lying in pools of blood, revealed it was no joke.

The pumping of the gun ended as quickly as it had begun, leaving a legacy of injury and disaster. There was another shot but by then the gun had disappeared from view and the single rasping sound seemed to be directed at something outside the classroom. Seizing the chance to escape, students began smashing the classroom windows with chairs and climbing between the jagged edges of plate glass to the safety of the outside world. The shooting had stopped for the moment, but their crazed longing for escape knew no logic.

By the time Father Bedard had gotten up from the floor "to see who was dead", many of the students were outside scattering in panic, although the realization of how close they had come to death had not yet dawned on them. The remainder staggered, dazed and stupefied, among the aftermath of a disaster area that, a few minutes earlier, had been an ordinary school classroom. After the final shot rang out, one of the students had mustered up the courage to kick the door closed, shutting out the murderous stranger. When it all seemed to be over, Father

Bedard dragged himself between the upturned desks and opened the door. Lying outside in the corridor, with half its head blown away, was the body of a boy. The priest thought he recognized what was left of the face, but the name that came to mind only added to his confusion.

The horror of classroom 71 had been spectacular enough to capture the complete attention of most of Ottawa late that afternoon. But an hour or so earlier, in the quiet of a typical suburb across the city, a greater, more sickening act had taken place.

Mary Poulin had arrived at her detached riverside home an hour or so before the school shootings and parked the car in the driveway at the side of the house. She gathered her belongings from inside the car, and walked towards the door. It was then she noticed smoke that seemed to be coming from the basement. She made several attempts to get inside the house but the density of the smoke prevented her. It was becoming obvious the fire, or whatever it was, threatened the whole house. The mother-of-four rushed to a neighbour's home across the road and from there called the fire department, thinking the clothes dryer she had left running had caught fire during the two hours she had been away. When Mrs. Poulin had left the house at 11:30, her son Robert had been watching the television and eating lunch. By now, he must have arrived at school, she thought.

The wail of sirens, unfamiliar in the secluded Warrington Drive area, captured the neighbours' curiosity and an audience gathered as fire trucks screeched to a halt outside number Five. As their colleagues hastily set up equipment, fire-fighters Lawrence Bowes and Raymond Flavel, protected by oxygen masks, went down into the basement. Through the thick, choking smoke, the two men searched for the source of the blaze but instead found the most horrifying sight they had ever seen.

There, among the smouldering ruins, lay a charred, semi-naked body lying manacled to a bed. It was sur-

rounded by the burnt remnants of books and magazines, barely discernible in the crisp destruction of what had once been the bedroom of the family's only son.

The body was obviously that of a female and although only her left wrist was handcuffed to the top bedpost, it seemed the other wrist and both feet had once been in similar positions. Ski bindings were strapped to the bottom bedposts, and marks around the girl's ankles showed clearly the use they had been put to. The head was covered with a melted plastic bag, and as the unsuspecting firefighters stood there in temperatures that most of us can only imagine, they guessed the body had been stabbed. (A post mortem held to determine the actual cause of death would later prove them right.) Feeling nauseated, and with their oxygen running out, the men retreated to the fresh air, leaving the basement hell to the police who had arrived minutes before. One of the firemen gasped to his superiors something about the body and with the possibility of an accident, suicide, or murder, senior police officers were called from the downtown office five or six miles away.

Mary Poulin's husband, Stuart, a local elementary school teacher, had been called home to the fire scene and was standing distraught with his wife when police asked him for a clue to the dead girl's identity. He didn't know. He had automatically telephoned his three daughters when he had reached home, eliminating the possibility it was one of them. It would be several hours before police discovered that the teenager lying dead in the basement was seventeen-year-old Kim Rabot, the daughter of a Sri Lankan family who lived just a few blocks from the Poulin house.

Veteran local coroner, James Dickson, who was called in to examine the scene and officially pronounce the girl dead, on his way out commented: "I've seen a lot of deaths by burning, but this was the most horrifying scene of them all." He had shaken his head and left.

Within an hour, police radios were buzzing with messages of yet another drama. This time, officers were told that two gunmen had been on a shooting rampage at St. Pius X High School. The gunmen, the message said ominously, were still in the school grounds. As police sped towards the school, they began to wonder what the hell was happening in their city on this bright Monday afternoon. Only after talking to people at St. Pius, would the brutal murder of a young girl be coupled with the crazed gunfire inside classroom 71. A quiet, studious youth named Robert Poulin was the common denominator, and for him, it was all over.

The school's principal, Father Len Lunney, had been disturbed from his afternoon work by a group of terrified students who had run to his office screaming for ambulances to be called. He immediately called for help and rushed to the classroom to see what had happened. Outside the room, the first thing he saw was the body of a boy lying in a pool of its own blood. A few feet away lay part of the boy's head. Lunney prayed and walked into the classroom.

Students and teachers were attempting to treat and comfort the injured while they waited for ambulances to arrive. Four of the injured looked badly hurt but a couple looked like they had escaped with only grazes. When the police arrived and started taking statements, the classroom was a battlefield of blood, books and desks.

Outside, initial sources for the press were the students from all grades who lingered in the school yard and who seemed to find it impossible to go home. Gradually, the Grade-13 students began to emerge from the school and besides having to answer the official questioners, also found their fellow students anxious to find out what had happened.

"I don't know for sure but they say it was Rober Poulin," said one girl.

"It was Poulin," claimed an eye-witness. "Now I didn't

know him very well. I don't think anyone knew him too well. He was a quiet sort of person."

Kevin Clarke, a seventeen-year-old who had been in the classroom, gave his version. "At first, we didn't know what was happening because from the back of the classroom we couldn't see the door. But some hit the floor and others just covered themselves with desks when the shooting started. When the gun went off, I thought it was a firecracker or something. I didn't realize what it was until later. Everyone was pretty upset. Some of us took off our shirts to make sure the injured had clean wounds and generally tried our best to help them. Others helped to calm down the ones that were upset."

Pierre Millette was the boy who kicked the door closed at the end of the shooting. "The whole thing happened so fast, I thought that whoever was shooting at us had stopped to reload, but as I shut the door, I saw his body lying there."

Mike Hannas was sitting twenty feet from the door when the shooting started. "The strangest thing was, it didn't sound like a gun at all. It sounded more like somebody popping a paper bag. I just couldn't believe it was him with the gun. We all thought he was a regular guy."

And so it went: a different point of view from each one of them, yet all united in their opinion that Robert Poulin was an okay guy but the sort of person who never really communicated with anyone. He was a loner, they said, who never really fitted in.

Hours after the shooting, Father Bedard sat in his small apartment in the grounds of the school, looking back on the day with shock and disbelief. In a shaky, saddened voice, he recalled that Poulin had been a clever and co-operative student. The priest, who had taught at St. Pius for eighteen years, said the youth was as religious as any other Grade-13 student and had never shown any

signs of violence. "I guess he must have snapped," he speculated.

The pieces began to fit together, but hours later, when the tie-in between the St. Pius shootings and the discovery of Kim Rabot's body was made, the search for a logical solution or explanation continued. Attention turned even to federal Liberal MP Hugh Poulin, who was related to Stuart and who was, by sheer coincidence, parliamentary secretary to Solicitor General Warren Allmand—the man who had been for many months at the centre of a gun control controversy. Like everyone else, Hugh Poulin regretted the incident and he promised that a major federal announcement on gun control would come soon.

It was a long night for everyone involved, and by the following day, millions of Canadians knew that a quiet, studious eighteen-year-old youth had injured seven of his fellow students after murdering and possibly raping a young girl. Those were the facts. Everyone knew the what, but no one knew the why.

It would take a week for more detailed information to be discovered. Police investigators worked night and day, letting out just enough information to satisfy a curious public. Appeals were made for anyone to come forward who had seen Robert Poulin during the afternoon before his death. Nobody ever did. A search for the source of the boy's gun was also made, but detectives had come up against a brick wall.

The police were deliberately omitting much from their official day-to-day statements but when those details were eventually made known, they would sicken and stagger everyone—as they had revolted even the hard-nosed investigators themselves.

Chapter Two

THE INVESTIGATION: A Trip Into Fantasy

You are all sinners—be sorry. —— Robert Poulin

The cramped, second-floor detective office at Ottawa's downtown police station was quiet. Some detectives were finishing up reports behind old grey desks. The thing the police were probably most interested in that afternoon was the Barry Forsyth murder trial—Forsyth was charged with attempted murder in the shooting of two Ottawa policemen. Then a call came into the detective office that would eclipse everything else.

Detective Sergeant Bob Kelly was walking through the office when he heard the call. There had been a shooting at a high school and two armed men were still on campus, shooting students. For a policeman, it was hard to imagine a worse situation. The detective office quickly emptied as officers ran to their cars. As they raced the eight miles to St. Pius X High School, the police had no idea what awaited them—they considered the grim possibility of several students dead, perhaps some held as hostages.

At St. Pius, the policemen noticed everyone they tried to talk to outside had a dazed, glassy look. Some couldn't talk, some simply cried. Many were in very deep shock

and the police still didn't know what was going on. Were there two people in there with guns?

Gradually, the story began to unfold and the hard facts emerge. There weren't two armed men and they weren't still on campus. There was just Robert Poulin—the good student—lying dead in a school hallway, a sawed-off, customized shotgun beside him, a bloody knife strapped across his chest, and earplugs in his pocket. There were empty shotgun casings lying around him. Someone had put a jacket over his head because Robert had put a twelve-gauge shotgun to his face and pulled the trigger. Other students had been shot, but none were dead as far as the police knew.

And it was then, for the first time, that people began to think of Brampton and of Michael Slobodian. On May 28, Slobodian, age sixteen, had walked into Brampton's Centennial Secondary School and shot two persons dead, wounded thirteen, and then had killed himself.

Police now knew the danger was over. Superintendent Tom Flanagan, head of criminal investigations for the Ottawa Police Department, arrived at St. Pius and put Bob Kelly in charge of the investigation. It was the start of a job that would have a major effect on Kelly's life, as it would for everyone who came in contact with the world of eighteen-year-old Robert Poulin. By now the school was cordoned off by police, with an officer standing guard outside the smashed windows of classroom 71. The inside of the room was a shambles, attesting to the raw fear that had gripped a classroom crowded with students—students who thought they were going to die.

By this time, some reporters and cameramen had started to arrive. They were taking pictures of everything that moved and continually asking, sometimes shouting, questions. Some of the students got angry and complained to Father Lunney. The priest replied that the media were only doing their jobs. Some students found a yearbook

and opened it on the hood of a car. Reporters ringed around and the students pointed to the pictures of Robert Poulin and his victims. Other reporters were stationed at Ottawa's Civic Hospital as the city waited to hear what had happened at St. Pius, and who was dead.

Then police received more information. A body had been found in a fire on Warrington Drive. But at that time, there was no occupant's or deceased's name, and no one knew the Poulin family lived on Warrington Drive. It seemed incredible that there could be two tragedies occurring in the city at the same time, but the police began to check into the facts. Then, things began to click.

Father Lunney was talking to police about Robert Poulin, a good, quiet student, when he mentioned in passing that Robert's father was a teacher at another school. The family, said the priest, lived on Warrington Drive. Kelly asked the priest to go through the story again and then police suspected that Robert Poulin may have committed more mayhem than just the St. Pius shootings. The pieces were fitting together, but at that time investigators couldn't imagine the final picture.

Although many of them were still in shock, students were quickly interviewed by the police to get those all-important first impressions. Anyone who had seen Robert during the shooting spree said he had had a distant look in his eyes. One student said Robert was grinning from ear to ear. On one thing though, they had all agreed—Robert Poulin was the last person you'd expect to do this. He was quiet at school and such a loner that, police found, not many people really knew him.

So Kelly began to head a gruelling investigation aimed at getting to know Robert Poulin. It would last for over 7,000 man-hours and would end with 248 witnesses being interviewed by 75 investigators. Some 125 exhibits would be collected in this bizarre case. All this to get to

know a boy who, police would later realize, had been shouting for attention in his own way all along.

For the first two or three weeks, Kelly and his long-time partner, Donald Devine, worked sixteen to eighteen hours a day. After that, it was twelve to fourteen hours a day until the start of the inquest. Kelly had entered Robert's world for six weeks. That world had taken him to pornography shops, to the militia training program, and to several other areas, the most disturbing of all being the basement room Robert Poulin had lived in at 5 Warrington Drive. When it was all over, Kelly had discovered that no one really knew Robert Poulin—not his parents, his teachers, nor his few friends. No one.

For the police, the impact of the tragedy was driven home by the list of victims and near-victims. It was the worst record in Ottawa for a criminal act committed by one person. It included a suicide, a murder (at that time), seven attempted murders, an arson, and a rape. Kelly would run through the list many times in the next six weeks:

—Robert James Poulin, eighteen, dead of a self-inflicted shotgun wound to the head that had severed his brain from his skull. The gun used was a sawed-off, twelve-gauge pump action. Death was immediate, in a hallway at St. Pius X High School, at 2:30 P.M., October 27, 1975.

—Kim Bernadette Rabot, seventeen, dead of multiple stab wounds. She had been stabbed fourteen times. Her body was found by firemen in Robert's charred basement room at 2:00 P.M. She suffered third-degree burns to her body and her left hand had been handcuffed to a bedpost. There was a second pair of handcuffs on another post but her right hand was not in them. Ski bindings were attached to the foot of the bed but her feet were not tied in them. A plastic bag was found over her face.

Firemen responded to the Code 2 signal at Warrington Drive and had used wire cutters to free Kim's left hand. There was evidence of sexual assault. Her body was naked except for a plaid blouse.

—Mark Hough, eighteen, gunshot wounds to the head and neck. Condition critical.

—Barclay Holbrook, seventeen, gunshot wounds to chest-cage area with penetration of pellets to lung area. Condition satisfactory.

—Terry Vanden Handenberg, eighteen, gunshot wound to back of neck and right shoulder. Condition satisfactory.

—Mark Potvin, eighteen, gunshot wounds to right of neck. Later discharged from hospital.

—Benggawan Kurniadi, eighteen, one minor pellet wound. Pellet removed and patient released.

—Renzo Catana, eighteen, minor pellet wound to neck. X-rayed and released.

—Mark Holleran, seventeen, superficial pellet wound to the scalp. Treated and released.

By now, Ottawa knew the names of the victims. For some families there was tragedy. For others, a sigh of relief. But for everyone, there was concern over just how something like this could happen. As the news came out, a sizeable portion of the community didn't like what it was hearing and let local newspapers and radio stations know about it. A "sweep it under the rug and it'll go away" attitude was quickly developing in certain areas.

The investigators felt differently. The police, for example, see a side of life that most citizens don't. There were a lot of things about Robert Poulin that people didn't want to hear about. It would upset and shock them because Robert was affected by some of the liberal, and by now standard trappings of society. If it happened once to a "normal boy" then it could happen again and again.

Working with Kelly was Ted Ormston, for almost four

years an Assistant Crown Attorney in Ottawa. Ormston had earned a name for himself as one of the best courtroom lawyers in the Crown's office. Competent, and with a mind of his own, Ormston had had his disagreements with some police officials in the past, but they respected him. As far as they were concerned, Ormston was the man they wanted to handle the case and they made a few moves to make sure he got in.

Ormston had been involved in trials surrounding weapon offences and he had also prosecuted many morality cases involving pornography, and magazine and book busts in the city. He held strong views on pornography, especially the danger it could be in the wrong hands, and evidence that would come up in the Robert Poulin case would show Ormston's fears about pornography to be not far off the mark. He was in court on Monday, October 27, when he was told about the shootings. It was something he added to a series of events which, for the young Crown Attorney, were adding up to one thing—a decision to move out of the city and back to northern Ontario. Later, at five o'clock that afternoon, Ormston was officially briefed by Flanagan on what the police knew.

Driving to work the next day, Ormston turned on his car radio and heard some psychiatrists speculating on the reasons behind October 27. It was less than twenty-four hours after the event; Ormston himself had hardly any facts, and yet these psychiatrists were telling why it had happened. It disturbed him, and he drove in to work to meet Kelly.

Police hadn't been able to find much of a relationship between Robert and the students he had shot. Robert didn't have many close friends and none of that small number were on the list of injured at the Ottawa Civic Hospital.

Kim Rabot was different. Police had found Robert had had a crush on Kim. She had been over to Robert's home

about two years before and he had sometimes been seen hanging around Kim in his shy, retreating manner. But as the investigation moved on to 5 Warrington Drive, it was soon discovered that there was no logical, easy explanation of the tragedy.

The Poulin house on Warrington Drive is a tudor style, two-and-a-half-storey house which fits in perfectly with the tranquil and upper-middle-class image of that section of Ottawa's south end bordering the Rideau River. Houses line shady lanes and there is very little traffic. Bank Street, one of the city's main arteries, is only a few minutes away, but it is really in another world. Here on Warrington Drive, life moves along at a slow pace. It was difficult to believe that this quiet and respectable neighbourhood could be linked to the tragedies of St. Pius or to the death of Kim Rabot.

The wood and brick exterior of the Poulin home was complemented by the wooden beams inside. But Robert's basement room wasn't part of the wood beam, high ceiling atmosphere of that house any more than Robert Poulin was part of this world on October 27. It was in Robert's room that the investigators and the Poulin family would find some of the most shocking exhibits that were to shed light on the bizarre case.

Robert lived at home with his mother, Mary, and father, Stuart. Mrs. Poulin is a nurse and was a part-time, voluntary, lunch-room supervisor at a local elementary school. Mr. Poulin is a former RCAF pilot who is now a school teacher. Robert had two sisters, Marie, twenty-one, and Jody, seven. Another sister, Sandra, was married. The Poulins, investigators found, were more than willing to help. They wanted to know, as much as anyone else, what had happened to Robert.

The house was taken over by police for three days. The Poulins stayed with relatives and were allowed to return to the home for belongings. Smoke and water damage was severe. Mr. Poulin helped police drain the

basement of water by showing them where a special drain plug was located; being in a flood prone area, the house had to have a special drain system. Robert's room was a curtained-off area of the basement at the southeast end of the house. The fire was confined mainly to the bed and some of the massive amounts of stored material in the room. The walls of the room were the cement walls of the basement. There was a rug on the floor and a small window near the ceiling. Robert had barred the window shut so very little natural light entered the room.

Police sifted through the room for a number of days as did Mr. Poulin, who found things he turned over to police. What they found gave the full bizarre scope to the crime they were investigating. These were some of the things the Ottawa community would find a little hard to handle:

—A box of women's clothing (negligees, bras, panties).
—An inflatable sex doll made of pink plastic with an electronic dildo attachment, and literature about sex dolls.
—Writings indicating Robert's disappointment in his doll.
—A list of the names of eighteen girls, of which Kim Rabot's was one. Kim's name was heavily underlined, as were four others. (Some of these girls later reported having earlier received strange phone calls and could hear only heavy breathing. The calls had stopped after October 27).
—A large number of girlie books with an index of them from 1967 to 1975, giving various pictures and ad ratings. Included were *Playboy*, *Oui*, and *Penthouse* magazines.
—Two yearbooks with attention drawn to certain girls in them.
—Four pairs of handcuffs and keys.

—An MGC Chief's Special Replica, 38-calibre, snub-nosed revolver.
—A will on the back of a notebook written in Grade 7, in which Robert left all of his worldly possessions to a girl. He gave the girl's address as Prince Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, North America, New World, the planet earth.
—Hacksaw blades.
—The fifteen-inch barrel section cut from the shotgun.
—Seventeen shotgun pellets, taken from the mattress under Kim Rabot's body.
—Condom-type vibrator device.
—Hard-core pornography books and magazines, some depicting bondage—women handcuffed to bedposts the way Kim Rabot was. (Titles included: *Sensuous Woman*, *Please Touch*, and *Rape of Ape*.)
—A scrapbook with pictures of nude men and women.
—Five obscene colour prints.
—An alarm clock stopped at 1:00 P.M.
—Gun cleaning equipment.
—Writings scribbled on sheets of paper indicating Robert's shyness towards women and his frustration in dealing with them.
—Robert Poulin's fingerprint, made by himself.
—An ivory-handled knife found in a night table.
—Various odd writings, including "chance to be a hero" and "inquiry not under arrest", written by Robert.
—A diary entry, typewritten on a single sheet of paper and dated April 7, 1975. It was found by Mr. Poulin and given to police.

In the upstairs living room of the home, police had found seven twelve-gauge shotgun shells on a chesterfield, by

the living-room window. They also found rifle shells on the living-room window sills, along with more shotgun shells. The rifle shells were for the 30-30 Winchester rifle Stuart Poulin kept in the house. It was an old gun and the father didn't know for sure if it could be fired. The shells were in the living room for one of two reasons, police thought: either Robert was ready for a shootout, or the shells were supposed to go off in the planned house fire to scare the firemen away. Three empty one-gallon cans that had once contained camp fuel and other flammable products, were found in the basement room. The contents were used to start the fire. Beside the bed where Kim's body was found were her schoolbooks. In the garage adjoining the Poulin home, there were some cement bags with blood on them. However, there wasn't enough blood for an accurate grouping. Robert's world had been entered by the investigators—by policemen who had seen a lot, but who had probably never seen anything quite like this.

Added to the exhibits found at Warrington Drive were the items taken by police at St. Pius. Robert's rifle, a Winchester Model 2200 shotgun, Serial No. L877371, cut down and adapted with a Model 2400 barrel, was found. The total length of the gun had been cut down to 33¾ inches. After four days of legwork, it was discovered that Robert had bought the gun at a Giant Tiger store on October 23, paying $109. The news immediately caught the attention of politicians who were embroiled in federal gun-control debates on Parliament Hill. A minor squabble broke out between Allmand and Dr. H. B. Cotnam, Ontario Chief Coroner, before the December 1 inquest. Dr. Cotnam said the federal government had refused to send a representative to answer questions on guns at the Slobodian inquest. Allmand had responded that this time there would be one.

Also found in the hallway at St. Pius, around Robert's body, were four empty shotgun shell casings and there

was still a live shell in the chamber of the gun. A blood-stained hunting knife with a 5⅛-inch blade was strapped across Robert's chest: probably the knife used to kill Kim Rabot. There was not enough blood on it for a positive grouping. The stab wounds Kim had received were consistent with the size of that blade.

Two earplugs were found in Robert's pockets and two bicycle clips in his coat pockets. His gold-rimmed glasses were found on the floor. A blue duffle bag—the one Robert had used to carry the gun to school—was found on the hallway floor. A short distance away was Robert's ten-speed bicycle, the bicycle that had brought him to St. Pius that day and the one he had worked so hard to pay for on his own.

In the duffle bag was something that would keep popping up throughout the investigation, along with a few other of Robert's possessions: a book of fifty short stories, and written on page 415 were the words, "You are all sinners—be sorry." That, along with Robert's scribblings, "chance to be a hero" and "inquiry not under arrest", were haunting reminders of the boy's anguish and his frustration at being unable to communicate his fears to anyone. He was probably trying to tell people he needed help; that he had been sick for a long time. But apparently, no one had heard him.

The diary entry found by Mr. Poulin was the single most important piece of evidence in the whole affair. It was typewritten without a mistake which was just what one might have expected from Robert Poulin. Something with no mistakes and finished assiduously. Once he had written in that diary, Robert Poulin was like a time bomb waiting to explode. In the diary, Robert had mapped out a plan to have intercourse with a girl, burn his family's house down in the hope they'd suffer, and then kill himself. He added he didn't want his family to get "one red cent" from him when he died. He also wrote that he had failed a biology test and was depressed. When a deeper

depression came along, he would carry out the plan and kill himself.

In the meantime, he had ordered an inflatable sex doll which he hoped would stave off his desire to rape and kill a woman. The diary, read in its entirety at the upcoming December 1 inquest, would become known across Canada.

Police discovered that Robert had had a bank account at the Billings Bridge Shopping Centre near his home. On October 24, true to his word not to leave anything to his parents, Robert withdrew the total amount in the account—$14.93. Even that nominal amount couldn't be left behind, in case his family got it. The biology test he had failed revealed another side of Robert. He had failed with a mark of 24 but had changed it to a 34.

The contents of the diary would be kept out of the news media until the inquest. Reporters had learned bits and pieces of it but did not file stories. Rumours were constantly heard, either at the police station at 60 Waller Street, or in the nearby courthouse that houses the Crown Attorney's office. Senior police officials were concerned, and warned investigators to keep a lid on everything until the inquest. This was not easy: there was a tremendous public clamour for information.

In part of the diary, Robert had mentioned the possibility of robbing people at night, of wearing a Balaclava and of raping a girl at knifepoint. This sent detectives out searching their files for any similar incidents that may have involved Robert Poulin. It was part of the massive investigation aimed at finding the answer to the puzzle. What police found was chilling, in the light of what had happened on October 27. Their information revealed that Robert Poulin had come very close to making his name known before October 27. The facts were the result of hundreds of hours of inquiries and interviews, and as stated before, they were chilling.

Police found complaints of a number of indecent

assaults in the bike path areas around Robert's home. The quiet, secluded paths were the favourite spots for many girls to go for a ride in the evening to relax, get some exercise or to watch the canal. The assaults also took place in the area of an apartment building on Riverside Drive, also near Robert's home. Coupled with this, there were also a couple of attempted rapes in the vicinity. The descriptions of the suspect fitted Robert Poulin: generally speaking, the height and the weight were the same and the build was similar. But the complainants in some of the cases said the attacker had nothing on but a Balaclava. After hearing of October 27, these near-victims may well have recalled how close they might have come to suffering the same fate as Kim Rabot.

Meanwhile, the long hours continued for the police. Time constraint was the major problem. Dr. Cotnam, who was notified of the events on October 27 shortly after they happened, had been kept informed of all developments. It didn't take him long to realize the effect this would have on the Ottawa community. Dr. Cotnam knew Ottawa—he had sat on inquests there before—and he wanted the inquest early in December. The coroner didn't want Robert Poulin's life being looked at close to the Christmas season. His decision was based on past experience and on the details of the case.

Ormston too was pushed. The Ottawa Crown Attorney's office, like the city courts, was overworked and understaffed. Ormston also faced the problem of being one of the attorneys who was often used on some of the more difficult or touchy cases his office handled. The Poulin case became his primary occupation from November 1 until the inquest, a month later. He, along with the psychiatrists who were eventually called in, would coordinate much of the case.

Ormston found it was a matter of constantly sifting through a mountain of information—what was relevant and what wasn't. He spent time at home reading and

re-reading the facts of the case, for it brought together many things Ormston had seen in his job as a crown attorney—the violence, the pornography and the guns.

As the investigation continued, there would be meetings among Flanagan, Kelly, Devine, Ormston, and Cotnam—all trying to find a reason. Cotnam became visibly impressed with the police investigation. Of course he had dealt with police forces across Ontario before, but Kelly's work would often be held up by the coroner in future as a good example of a complete investigation. When it was all over, Dr. Cotnam would devote a three-day course for new coroners to the Poulin case and how it was handled.

Many others involved in the case also felt a responsibility to get at the answers. The word "normal" kept coming up in conversations. Robert Poulin was a normal boy from a normal family who lived a normal life, according to standards tacitly enforced by the community. If this sort of thing could happen to Robert Poulin, it could happen to anyone, they thought. The question was —what had happened to Robert?

The investigation was now about three weeks old and the psychiatrists picked by Dr. Cotnam flew up to Ottawa to begin their interviews. The coroner had wanted the best, so he had asked Dr. John D. Atcheson and Dr. Gordon E. Warme to look at the case. They were also the doctors who had been called in for the Brampton shooting.

Dr. Atcheson is senior psychiatrist of the Forensic outpatient department at Toronto's Clarke Institute of Psychiatry. Dr. Warme is the chief of the child and adolescent department of the Clarke Institute. Ormston remembered at that time that the psychiatrists didn't think pornography played any part at all in the events of October 27. Having worked on the Slobodian case, Ormston said the doctors first believed the Poulin case to be a mirror image of the Slobodian. But later, when the

Ottawa investigators flew to Toronto for another meeting, the aspect of pornography had become part of the psychiatric documents. Drs. Atcheson and Warme are among the best in their profession but even they would note later that the one person who could give the answer to October 27 never would—Robert Poulin.

The investigation was beginning to close in on what were surely Robert Poulin's main causes of depression: his loneliness and his desperate attempts at a human relationship in which he could feel important. That was the saddest part of the entire affair. It was driven home when police found an ad Robert had taken out in a paper, looking for someone to be his friend.

The ad ran in the Ottawa *Journal* from October 3 to October 10, 1975, and read: "MALE, 18, looking for companionship. P.O. Box 4021, Station E." The postal box was the same one Robert used to receive pornographic books and materials: a box his parents never knew about. Robert got three answers to his ad, all from homosexuals, but he responded to none of them. He wrote a reply to one but it was never mailed. It was found in his room and read:

Dear ———

I have never had a nomosexual experience, though the thought has crossed my mind before.

However, I'm not only interested in sex, but in sharing other pastimes and hobbies. My favourite hobbies are, in order: wargaming, reading (science fiction) and collecting (a variety of things including stamps and models).

I hope you have some ot the same hobbies, especially wargaming.

Wargames were Robert's main interest. He played them over the phone with a friend, Victor Tolgysey. In fact,

before the October 27 shooting, Robert and Victor were in the middle of playing out the Second World War. Wargames are chess-like games of military strategy and Robert had several of them. It was Risk, a beginner's wargame that Robert had played the one time he had had Kim Rabot over to his house. Robert played a number of wargames and preferred the ones that required the movements of large numbers of troops and artillery forces—he liked military strategy. He did have one game called Sniper, which was a one-on-one situation. The detectives found that wargames were Robert's main recreation and that he didn't play any sports at all. Robert Poulin was a loner, everyone said, and they would quickly add that it was by his own choice.

In some subjects, Robert was a top student at St. Pius and his goal was a career in the military. He was a private in the Cameron Highlanders militia until the summer before October 27. He had joined the militia as a private after the biggest disappointment of his life—he had been refused officer candidate training and was told about it only after he believed he had been accepted.

Robert came from a military background and it was the one area that he seemed interested in. Outside of Victor, the people who knew Robert Poulin were people in the militia with him. In going into his background, investigators found that his militia training covered a variety of subjects. Among them were: company drill, map using, casualty evacuation, communications, weapons characteristics, fire-trench construction, wiring, camouflage, preparing for battle, movement by day and by night, patrols, rifle training, first aid, military law, and nuclear and chemical warfare. It was all part of the standard militia training, but Robert Poulin had gotten more than just standard training.

He had gotten a little unauthorized commando training on the side after hours, given by a militia corporal who

has since volunteered to serve with British forces in Northern Ireland. The commando training, which Robert had enjoyed, helped make him a little more efficient and dangerous at St. Pius. It certainly was not the reason for the shootings but it helped determine the results.

The parents talked with police but couldn't offer any clues. They couldn't think of anything Robert had done to warn them or anyone else of the impending crisis. Robert had never given them much reason for concern. He was quiet and well disciplined and never drank or used drugs. There was just no reason to suspect Robert Poulin of ever doing anything wrong.

Stuart Poulin did agree that the refusal of officer training could have been quite a blow to his son, a boy who had built his entire life and future around the military. After a one-hour interview, a three-man review board at that time had judged Robert "immature". He then joined the militia to come up through the ranks; his father never knew if he fully accepted this. During the last two weeks before October 27, Robert stopped showing up at the militia meetings at Ottawa's Cartier Square Drill Hall. The investigators discovered that Robert had lied on his application form for officer training. He said that he had played sports and was actively interested in playing lacrosse, football, baseball and hockey. Robert had never played these sports, at least not that anyone could remember, but he had been told that one of the requirements for officer training was participation in team sports. It was not the first time Robert Poulin had lied but it was tragic just the same.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Poulin respected Robert's privacy and didn't infringe on it. They seldom entered his room. In all some 250 soft- and hard-core books and magazines were found in the basement room. As Ormston filed through them, he noticed that a lot of them could be bought at any grocery-store bookstand. Material that once

was under a sealed plastic cover and came with a ten-dollar price tag was now among the popular men's magazines.

The violence/pornography link concerned everyone who was involved in the case at this stage. Kim Rabot's death was not the result of a cold-blooded murder but rather of an act of perverted sexuality, an emotional state Robert Poulin hadn't developed unaided.

One of the more disturbing things found in the basement room was the handcuffs. Pictures of the kind Robert saw in some of his hard-core magazines often depicted women manacled in handcuffs. Robert's were traced to The Brothers' Bookstore, a shop specializing in sexual items and "adult magazines". (The store has since closed down.) An ad in a local newspaper, *The Citizen*, showed if you were short on cash you could still get your handcuffs: "Special on handcuffs—CHARGEX." Robert's handcuffs cost him $21.95.

Ormston was one of the first to warn of the influx into Canada of the type of pornography that has become prevalent in some cities in the United States. But his warning had come years earlier, when it wasn't fashionable to say things like that. Ormston believed a pattern was developing here which was in line with his feelings on pornography and violence. Expose an unstable person to enough of it and you get back a mirror image—the unstable person becomes what he is exposed to. Ormston saw Robert as living in a world of fantasy, playing his wargames and gradually becoming part of that world until he couldn't tell the difference between fantasy and reality. From there he believed it wasn't a big step to taking a girl off the street and bringing her into his world.

As for the St. Pius shootings, the investigators believed Robert Poulin was probably copying Michael Slobodian. The knife, the sawed-off shotgun, and the shells that Robert took with him to St. Pius, convinced Ormston that Robert was ready to make a last stand and fight to the

death, so to speak. Slobodian had done the same thing. He went into his high school in Brampton armed with two rifles and a pocketful of shells.

Rumours continued to float around Ottawa that Robert Poulin had perhaps picked out his victims—that he was shooting people he didn't like or who had given him trouble at school. That theory was quickly ruled out by Ormston and his team. As their investigation was coming to an end, they had virtually agreed that Robert had not been looking for anyone in particular that day. He was crying out for some sort of recognition: something he had wanted all his life. Robert had not had enough time to pick out his victims. Besides that, the theology class that day was a merged class with no seating plan so Robert could not have known who would be there or where they would be seated. Also students were coming in late. The possibility that the shooting could have been a religious act of some sort was also ruled out.

Why classroom 71 then? Probably because that was the classroom Robert Poulin was supposed to be in that afternoon. It was agreed that Robert had followed his April 7 diary plan to the letter, but there was nothing in that diary about going to St. Pius and shooting anyone. This had convinced some of the investigators that Robert had read about Michael Slobodian and then had added St. Pius to his October 27 schedule.

The investigation was nearly complete. Throughout, police had heard the adjectives "normal", "quiet", and "intelligent" so often it had had an eerie effect on them. It was a tragedy that someone of Robert's age could have been as sick as he was and never be detected—not by parents, fellow students, or teachers.

Robert Poulin had finally gotten the attention he had wanted all his life. Stacks of files, police reports, fire reports, lab tests and an endless list of witnesses and exhibits attested to that. But what had made Robert take that final step, the step he knew would get him that

attention? That was the question that would bring a tinge of frustration to the work of the investigators. They had dug out the facts; it had taken over 7,000 man-hours but there they were. They had zeroed in on the many facets of Robert's life. But what was the key, the trigger that had set them all off? After working on the case nonstop since October 27, still nobody knew why Robert had written "You are all sinners—be sorry." in that book of fifty short stories. Still no one knew what "chance to be a hero" and "inquiry not under arrest" meant. They could have been nothing or they could have been everything. That information was given to the psychiatrists but nothing was heard back from them. Maybe they *were* nothing but by that time Ormston's team was convinced that anything Robert Poulin had written down had had meaning.

The psychiatrists called in by Dr. Cotnam were the best. No one doubted that. But was too much expected of them? The only person who really had all the answers was Robert Poulin. Investigators were convinced of one thing, however: October 27 was Robert Poulin's day to be somebody. He had been building up to that point, Ormston's team believed, possibly since he was twelve years old. That was when he had first moved into his basement room.

The contributing factors that made Robert Poulin act the way he did on October 27 brought home problems in society that people in Ottawa would not want to examine critically. It is one thing for a person, a belief, or an institution to come under criticism, but it's quite another to have that criticism linked as a contributing factor to a dramatic blood-letting. Would the public be able to handle what they were going to hear? After all, what Robert Poulin did on October 27 isn't supposed to be done by "normal" boys. That was the concern of everyone involved. How would the public react? What would

come out of all this work, these endless interviews, the long hours?

While the inquest was only a few days away, the battle over gun control continued on Parliament Hill and for the people who worked on the Poulin case, the entire debate now seemed so sadly out of place. After what had happened at St. Pius, and in this day and age, how could anyone argue in favour of having guns around?

No doubt the public would like to hear that neither their rules nor their institutions had played any part in the events of October 27. They would be told exactly the opposite. That was the reason for the quiet concern as Ted Ormston sat at home, quietly running over the list of his witnesses again and again.

There was one final meeting before the inquest began. The next time the investigators would meet would be at a lower-town hotel in Ottawa—the scene of the Poulin/Rabot inquest, and Ted Ormston would be playing to a packed house.

SECTION TWO

A NORMAL BOY IN A NORMAL WORLD

Chapter Three

THE INQUEST: An Attempt to Explain

A tragedy is a play of suffering and conflict in which a great man is brought to destruction, partly through a flaw in his character, but mainly through circumstances beyond his control.

——Robert Poulin

By 10:00 A.M. December 1, 1975, Salon B of the Holiday Inn in Ottawa's lower-town district was full. Policemen were leading the last of the spectators to their seats. A massive press, radio, and television contingent was ready to relay the news, facts which were to become known across Canada, throughout the United States—and in the case of the most dramatic evidence, in England and other parts of the world. The room was lit by overhanging chandeliers which seemed harsh in contrast to the grim and bizarre subject that would be heard within its walls. A room used for banquets and convention meetings—happy occasions—doesn't easily lend itself well to an inquest, especially one of this nature. But Ottawa's clogged courts couldn't handle a four-day inquest, so the hotel had been booked. Outside, the weather was chilly and bleak.

Assistant Crown Attorney Ted Ormston was in the room early, going through his notes and witnesses for the

day one final time. He had done it all weekend but there was little left to do.

Dr. Cotnam arrived and talked briefly with reporters in the hallway outside the inquest chambers. Known as a down-home-style doctor while acting as Ontario's chief coroner, he had earned a reputation as an open, honest person who frequently spoke his mind. But even Cotnam looked a little apprehensive waiting for the proceedings to begin. He told one reporter the best word to describe what everyone was about to hear was "bizarre", and then he left to get ready.

The three-man, two-woman jury filed in and sat down. The audience became silent. Dr. Cotnam poured himself a glass of water and began to make his opening remarks. Ormston and Detective Sergeant Kelly sat side by side, probably wondering what the reaction would be to the next four days of testimony. Of one thing everyone was certain: at least there would be no more surprises. They had all worked on this case for so long that nothing they didn't know about could possibly occur. They were wrong.

Dr. Cotnam was wrapping up his opening address and telling the jury they would be hearing some bizarre details about the case. He said he wanted some good to come out of the inquest and urged the jury to listen to all the evidence and then to make recommendations. There was a recess, and then came the shocking surprise that no one was ready for: Mark Hough, the most critically injured of the seven students shot at St. Pius, had died.

Ormston was called from the room before he had had a chance to call his first witness and told about the death. Reporters rushed around asking what was going on but officials declined to say anything. Finally, Ormston returned and the inquest reconvened. Looking pale and speaking slowly, the young crown attorney told everyone that Hough had died. A girl shouted "Oh god, no!" and someone else began to cry. The announcement was a

jolting reminder to everyone of why they were at the inquest in the first place: Robert Poulin, the St. Pius shootings, and the murder of Kim Rabot.

Hough's death had stunned Ormston. Earlier, he had been assured that Hough had a good chance of pulling through. Now he was dead. An innocent kid, thought Ormston, was dead, killed by someone who hardly knew him. Ormston suddenly felt there wouldn't be any end to it. Still shaken from the announcement he had just made, he prepared to call his first witness.

There was absolute silence as the first two witnesses testified that morning. Stuart and Mary Poulin were sworn in, and then, under almost gentle questioning from Ormston, they told everyone about their son—the son they knew, not the stranger who had brought about this inquest.

Stuart Poulin, fifty-one, a former Armed Forces pilot and now an elementary-school teacher, adjusted his glasses as he stood erect in the witness stand and gave his evidence. His grey hair neatly combed, wearing a sports jacket and tie, the father exuded self-control and spoke in a precise manner.

Mary Poulin, a nurse and a woman active in community affairs in her area, also gave her evidence calmly. But she too appeared to be talking about two different people. For the parents, it was difficult to believe it had been their son who had done all of this. The spectators paid close attention. Here, they thought, were the people who would be able to pinpoint what had gone wrong. They were the ones who would be able to pick out the danger signals Robert had sent out. Other parents would now have a checklist—some guide useful in keeping an eye on their own "normal" kids. That wasn't how it went.

Stuart and Mary wanted to know the answers too. They wanted to know more than anyone else. They had spent hours talking to psychiatrists but couldn't think of anything that Robert had done or said that might have

warned of the coming tragedy. But they did present a pattern, the pattern of Robert's home life, and that would be of major interest to Dr. Cotnam and the thousands of others touched by the incident. The Poulins, along with the Rabots, were called at the beginning of the inquest so they could quickly end the ordeal of testifying and could avoid hearing the rest of the evidence if they wished. Mr. and Mrs. Poulin stayed in the spectators' seats until the end. But first they talked about their son, as they knew him.

Robert Poulin had moved into his basement room when he was twelve years old. A third daughter, Jody, had been born to the Poulin family and Robert had moved to the basement to make room for the new baby. He had made the move happily, preferring the basement because it was warm in the winter and cool in the summer. He was also glad to be away from the girls upstairs. Robert's move to the basement was the only alternative to putting two of the daughters together in one room.

He lived in that room in almost total privacy, it was soon discovered. The Poulin family respected each other's privacy and Robert's was no exception. "Just close the door so I don't see it," was the way Mary Poulin described how she handled the problem of the children's rooms getting messy. If Robert wanted to join the military he would have to learn how to clean his own room. In the room was Robert's own telephone. It allowed him to play wargames with his friends without ever having to leave the room. Wargames had been a passion with Robert. He had played them continuously for the three years preceding his death. But, as the inquest would later hear, it was in this curtained-off basement room that Robert had nursed the bizarre and sadistic fantasies that in part had formed the basis for his subsequent actions.

Robert's parents maintained their son had had a good

family life right up until the day of his death. Robert had been taught the value of a dollar and that you had to work for what you got, they maintained. When he wanted something, like the electric typewriter he had in his room, or the ten-speed bicycle he rode to St. Pius, he worked for it. He had a *Globe and Mail* paper route early in the morning and once had worked long hours in a pizza house. That was the last job he had had. Robert had gone to church every Sunday. He was never hostile and not the kind of person who held a grudge, they added. The matter of privacy continued to pop up through the testimony. The father said anyone going to Robert's room would always knock first and then wait for permission to enter. A boy of that age had that right and Robert got it, his father said.

Robert's wargames would sometimes take days to play and would run through weekends and holidays. Sometimes he played by himself and at other times over the phone with friends. The games he played were complicated, involving complex military strategies, the type of games that often required total involvement or escape from reality. Mary Poulin had rarely entered her son's room, and Stuart Poulin hadn't seen anything unusual about Robert's private life in the basement. The father said he himself had worked in the basement on model airplanes when he was younger. As for the wargames, Robert had expressed a desire to go into the military and his family had had a military background. Robert wanted to get the highest marks in school so that he could enter the Royal Military College in Kingston.

Mary Poulin was closer to her son than was her husband. Robert, she recalled, was always very happy and never had many health problems. He was shy to a certain extent, but always had a houseful of friends at his birthday parties. But as he got older, he had become more selective about his friends.

Robert loved history she said, and in all his eighteen years was never involved in anything more than the usual childish spats.

The parents had never gone through Robert's room, the room that yielded the list of exhibits that had shocked veteran policemen. Stuart Poulin, however, had gone into Robert's room about a year before the shootings at St. Pius. What greeted him were walls plastered with centrefolds from *Playboy* magazine. There were some spread out on the floor. The father thought this was a normal thing for a seventeen-year-old boy and the matter was quickly dropped. Mary too, remembered the pictures going up. They were referred to as Robert's girlfriends down there—in a teasing manner. The attitude of the family at that time was one of "Oh, maybe Rob was interested in girls after all."

The mass of pornography, the inflatable sex doll, the private post-office box he had used to receive all of this, came as a complete surprise to the parents. Some of the mail had come to the house but it was put on the dining-room table, unopened. Robert Poulin's excessive privacy stuck in the minds of everyone listening to the parents that day. It would be the subject of the news reports that were filed on the first day's evidence. Although it was something the psychiatrists would not comment on, except to say that Robert had had a normal home life, it was a source of concern to many others involved in the case.

Robert had mentioned Kim's name in passing when he was in Grade 10 and his mother had asked him to invite her over sometime. It was the first time he had brought a girl home and it was a happy occasion, she remembered. They played Risk, a beginner's wargame.

Many people had already developed a portrait of Robert Poulin. They saw him as a developing adolescent who was left to go off in his own world and develop on his own. Robert Poulin, the inquest would show, might well be an example of what could happen to a person exposed to many of the worst things society had to offer but who is without anyone around to hold up a warning sign.

The parents had noticed no change in Robert as October 27 had approached. Mary Poulin remembered Robert had been disappointed at being turned down for officer training. Now for anyone else, a minor show of disappointment is nothing to get overly excited about, but with Robert, any outward show of emotion was of major importance. At the time though, the parents had had no way of knowing that, nor had anyone else.

Ormston had laid the groundwork. He had had the parents paint a picture of Robert as best they could.

Now he centred on the day of the killings. The father had not been at home that day (he was teaching school) so it was Mrs. Poulin who told the story. Again there was an air of tension. Surely Robert must have said or done something that day that would have given some idea of what was going on in his mind. That was ruled out when the mother told how her son had come up from his room that day and asked for his favourite peanut butter sandwich on toast—after apparently leaving Kim Rabot either dead or unconscious in his room.

The night before, the family had played cards and Robert had quit early and gone to his room. The following morning, the family was having breakfast in the kitchen. Robert came upstairs, wearing a white T-shirt and bluejeans and was putting on his jacket. He said he didn't want breakfast. He had made a peanut butter sandwich the night before because he didn't want to disturb the family that morning. Robert said he had things to do. He left the house between 7:45 and 8:00 A.M. Later, between 8:15 and 8:30 A.M., Mrs. Poulin heard a loud "clomping" noise. The noise came from the

stairs which led to Robert's basement room. It wasn't unusual for Robert to enter the house through the garage entrance and then go down the stairs.

Mrs. Poulin noticed the noise because Robert was usually very quiet. This was one day, however, when Robert Poulin had decided he wasn't going to be quiet. Robert said he was back early because there were just a few notes he had to pick up and his school work was pretty well finished. Mrs. Poulin then began doing her household chores, which included the washing. Around 10:00 A.M. she went down to the basement to talk to Robert. At this time, it was discovered later, she wasn't dealing with the son she had always known. She was talking to a stranger, a person living in another world, a person who probably would have killed her if she had entered that room. But she didn't enter. Instead, in keeping with Robert's privacy, she stood outside the curtain that acted as the door to his room.

"Knock, knock, can I talk to you for a minute?" she asked.

"Yeah, but don't come in," said Robert.

"I've got you an eye appointment at 3:45 on Friday, the twelfth, will that be okay?" she asked.

"Yeah," Robert replied.

And that was it. Mother and son talking to each other separated by a curtain. Inside the room lay Kim Rabot, unconscious or possibly dead. The mother hadn't noticed anything peculiar about her son at that time. Perhaps that had been a good thing. Ormston, from the facts he had received from the psychiatrists, believed Robert would have killed his mother if she had gone into that room. Robert Poulin had been building up to October 27 for a long time and once he had decided to carry out his plan no one was safe near him.

Mrs. Poulin went back upstairs. About an hour later, about 11:00 A.M., Robert came into the kitchen. There

was still nothing unusual about her son's behaviour. He even asked for his favourite sandwich—peanut butter on toast—something his mother remembered him as saying only a mother could make properly. Robert had one sandwich and then watched a quiz show on television.

By now, the spectators in the inquest chambers were on the edge of their seats. A boy who had just kidnapped a girl and possibly killed her, asking for his favourite sandwich and then tuning in a quiz show? No one had ever heard anything like it!

Around 11:30 A.M., Mrs. Poulin left the house to go to her job as a voluntary lunch-room supervisor at a local school. On her way out, Robert asked her if she could pick up some books for him at the library, including some French books he was reading to his sister, and a book on the life of Sir Thomas More. Mrs. Poulin obliged and when she returned home, around 1:30 P.M., she noticed the back door was open. That was unusual, but before she had had time to think about it, she saw the thick black smoke coming from a second-floor window. She rushed to a neighbour's and called for help.

When the firetrucks arrived, Mrs. Poulin heard someone mention a body. She thought someone had broken into her home, set a fire, and then had gotten caught in it. Kim Rabot's body was found by firemen at 2:00 P.M. Twenty minutes later, Robert Poulin would have completed his plan for the day. By that time, he had shot seven students at St. Pius and then had turned his sawed-off shotgun on himself. Robert Poulin had given himself what he had once described as "the true bliss".

Ormston cleared up one matter immediately. The National Research Council had conducted noise tests in the Poulin home. They were made because the actual time when Kim Rabot was raped and killed was in part open to theory. There was the possibility the tragic act could have been committed between 8:30 and 11:00 A.M.

and Mrs. Poulin may not have been able to hear the girl screaming. Noise tests were conducted to see if, with the radio playing and certain appliances operating, a scream from either the garage or the basement room could have been heard in the kitchen by Mrs. Poulin. The conclusion reached was that Kim Rabot could have screamed and not been heard.

Before she left the witness stand, Mrs. Poulin was asked if she could think of anything that Robert had done that could have tipped his hand about October 27. It was a question Mrs. Poulin knew everyone was asking and she looked relieved that it had been asked. No, there was absolutely nothing she could think of. She had lain awake at nights trying to think of something, but there was nothing. She left the witness stand and went to sit with her husband. They would then listen to facts about their son that they had never known before.

Kim's thirteen-year-old brother, John, was the last person to see his sister alive. He told the inquest of waiting for a bus with her on that fatal Monday morning, near the corner of Cameron Avenue and Harvard Street, a few blocks from the Poulin home. Robert Poulin had approached and told Kim he had something to show her. Kim had hesitated but had gone with Robert after he had assured her he would get her to school on time.

Kim's mother, Joan, an attractive, delicately featured woman, was on the witness stand for only a brief period. She said her daughter had probably gone with Robert because she didn't want to hurt his feelings. Kim had had a strong social conscience and believed that people shouldn't harm each other, either physically or emotionally, said Mrs. Rabot. She described Kim as a young girl gradually blossoming into womanhood. On October 27, Kim had asked to borrow her mother's lipstick because it matched the outfit she was wearing. Mr. Rabot had teased his daughter about how pretty she looked.

The inquest testimony would now take a sharp turn.

For those who had been listening this first day, it was like entering another world: a world where sadistic fantasy ruled and where a human life meant really nothing more than a piece in one of Robert Poulin's wargames. It was a world that many people, after hearing about it, wanted swept "under the rug". The "don't talk about it and it will go away," attitude. For many people in Ottawa that was the only way they could handle what was unfolding before them.

Robert Poulin's world was a product of many things. It was a product of his loneliness and his desire to be someone liked and respected. It was the product of what society either accepts, tolerates, or chooses to believe is the right way to behave. Going into Robert Poulin's world carried with it serious questions—questions of everyday lifestyles that had been considered acceptable before the boy had hit the headlines. Robert Poulin had raised those questions in dramatic fashion—he had killed himself and two others. Ormston and Cotnam thought three deaths warranted questioning and that it would be criminal not to go after answers. Still, during the inquest and afterwards, the "sweep it under the rug" attitude sprang up in many parts of Ottawa. How many Robert Poulins would it take, they wondered.

Now came the hard facts. The next witnesses dealt with them all the time in their jobs. And in a case like this, their hard-hitting, tersely worded facts had considerable impact.

Les McPhee, a veteran investigator with the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office, was the first witness to touch on Robert's hate for his family. Part of Robert's actions on October 27 had been in revenge against a family he had considered killing. McPhee had found two trails of "girlie" magazines leading from Robert's basement room. The magazines led to the stairs leading to the upstairs portion of the house, and to the furnace in his father's workshop. *Playboy*, *Penthouse* and *For Men Only* maga-

zines made up the fuses. Lack of oxygen stopped the blaze from igniting the fuses and gutting the entire home.

The fire did catch in Robert's room where the temperature eventually reached a blistering 1,600°F. If everything in the basement, including the fuses, had been thoroughly drenched in the camp fire fuel used to start the bedroom fire, it is doubtful that Robert would have gotten out of 5 Warrington Drive to complete the second part of his plan.

William S. Hillman, an Ottawa city fireman, found Kim's body, her left wrist handcuffed to the bedpost and he had cut the handcuff loose to free the hand. Still shaken by the memory of the event, the fireman thought to himself and said, "It's a very sad state of affairs to happen . . . that's all I can say."

That was the first day in the Poulin/Rabot inquest. Ormston went home and found out he couldn't turn on a radio without hearing about it. Problems were anticipated with a potentially over-zealous media, and with that in mind, policemen had been posted at the inquest doors. But most of their time had been spent directing people to seats.

The media had been as shocked as everyone else by what they were hearing. The majority of reporters could see what emotional strain the main parties were suffering, and those who couldn't were quickly given the message.

The next morning's testimony was taken up mostly with the students of St. Pius, who remembered October 27 as the day some of them thought they might die. The sound of the shotgun, the sight of Robert Poulin pulling the trigger, and the panic of escape all came back. Renzo Catana, who had received a minor pellet wound in the neck, summed up everyone's feelings when he said that at the time he just couldn't believe what was happening. The second shotgun blast and the screaming of the other students had jolted him to the reality of what was happening.

Margaret Chaput, a physical education teacher at St. Pius, remembered seeing someone in the school cafeteria shortly before the shooting. He was carrying a blue duffle bag and looked a little scared. Listening to the students in classroom 71 recall their emotions brought back the terror of that day, but people had heard it all before and at least they were prepared. But no one was ready for what came next. There had been no way to prepare anyone for it.

Ottawa police constable, Malcolm Pearce, took the stand. He was the identification officer who had handled the bizarre contents of Robert's room. Pearce held all the cards, and now Ormston was prepared to let him deal them out. The constable exhibited Robert's inflatable sex doll to the inquest. It was a-piece of pink plastic with arms and legs and a line curved up for a smile, painted on a face, that also had button eyes. The hair resembled strands of rope. Kelly winced, because for him this was one of the saddest, most pathetic moments in the whole episode. Pearce had a quiet voice, but as he described the doll, while holding it up for everyone to see, the words he used seemed to boom from a bullhorn. The silence around him expressed shock and sadness.

Then Pearce went through the other things found in the room. He told about the pornography books, the girlie magazines, the handcuffs and the other things police had found. Then he came to the diary and with it, the Robert Poulin that no one knew: a lonely Robert, full of hate, and with no reason to live. The single typewritten page was the only diary entry found.

Dated April 7, 1975, the diary was the one referred to by officials before the inquest as the one piece of evidence that would shed some light on why two young people were dead. In it, Robert had mapped out his plan for rape, murder, and suicide. He considered killing his family but didn't want them to experience the "true bliss" of death. He decided instead to burn their house down.

The diary revealed the other Robert Poulin. Until now, everyone had met only the first one. Pearce began to read the diary into the inquiry record. Again, total silence enveloped the hall, this time accompanied by blank stares, reporters who had stopped writing, and Dr. Cotnam assessing the reaction. A mild shock had set in after it was read. It was as if the door to Robert Poulin's mind had been opened for the first time, and everyone shivered as they looked inside. The entry read:

Dear Diary:

Today is April 7, 1975. I think I just flunked my first test, a Biology 521 test. I also handed in a half-assed attempt at an essay to Mr. Brian Smith (Eng 421). The reason I did not put much effort into it was because in the essay he handed back the other day he gave me a poor mark, and I know that it would take me much too long to write an essay worthy of better marks and I have again forced myself to do a rush job on it.

For the last couple of weeks I have been fairly depressed, although over the spring break it wasn't as bad as when I let all my work back up on me. I have the feeling that I am doing the same thing again this term, but somehow I can't seem to get myself to do any work. During my deepest part of my depression a couple of weeks ago I thought of committing suicide, but I don't want to die before I have had the pleasure of fucking some girl. So I decided to order a model gun from an ad in Gallery magazine (April, 1975). With this I was going to threaten a girl in one of the dark streets around here and rape her. I planned to carry my father's scout knife strapped to the inside of my right leg. If the girl caused any trouble I would kill her, for I was planning to kill myself anyhow, so I had nothing to lose. (I was also planning to wear a bella-clava so that it would not be necessary to kill her unless she caused some trouble). After that, I am not sure how soon I would kill myself, I would wait for something to cause a deeper depression, and thus a reason for killing myself. The day I would kill myself would be a Sunday, for if I was going to die, the people that made up my family were going to suffer. At first I thought of using the rifle in my father's closet to kill them, but then I thought about the fact that death is the true bliss, and I would not want them to be happy, especially to have them enter the kingdom of death at the same time as myself. So, I decided to set fire to the house, starting by putting gas all over everything, then setting fire to everything from top to the bottom of the house. I would finish in the basement where I was planning on having a fuse leading into the oil drums. I would light this and then shoot myself with the rifle. I was going to make sure, though, that I burned the place down soon after payday so that they would lose the largest possible amount of money. I was also planning on having all my earthly possessions with me so that they wouldn't gain one red cent from me.

On Friday or Saturday night, Marie and I talked about her getting an apartment, and how I too would like to get one, but that there would be no possible way for me to get the money necessary for one.

Recently I went up to Tim's Second Hand Bookstore and bought all of her back issues of *Playboy* that were complete. On Saturday I went back and bought other mag's, and a couple of these were Nuget magazines. On the inside of the cover of the first one that I opened I found an ad for "Everything" Dolls. These are life-like dolls of a girl that has everything. She has a vagina, and it is an electronically operated male-oriented dildo, (vibrator). She costs $29.95, and I broke myself ordering

her. Now I no longer think that I will have to rape a girl, and am unsure as to whether or not I will still commit suicide.

I have a half hatched idea about using the gun to rob people at night. My excuse for going out at night would be going to the Cartier Square Drill Hall. For the robberies, I would not even have to skip going to the Hall, for I could quickly rob someone after, on the way home.

I don't know what else to say now, so I'm going to close. Please see the following page for an invoice on all stag mag's that I own to date, and I am thinking about also listing my S & T's, Moves, Conflicts, and all my games on that page also. So long for now.

Robert Poulin.

What Cotnam would later describe as Robert's "victim list" was found among several other pieces of paper that were written by him. Two looseleaf binder pages contained the names and an occasional crude, physical description of eighteen girls, most with addresses and telephone numbers beside them. Next to each of the names was the page number of the phone book where the name could be located. Some of the names had no phone number and instead the word "check" was written beside them. Others had the page number of the phone book, but no telephone number, and instead the notation "too many no.'s." Kim Rabot's name was the last of the thirteen listed on the first page. Kim's name, along with four others, was heavily underlined. This was the potential victim list. If Kim Rabot hadn't been chosen, someone else on it would have. Some of the girls listed had received strange phone calls but couldn't be sure who it had been. In each case, the calls had stopped after October 27.

As if compelled to bring some order to his chaotic life, Robert had meticulously kept a rating of all his girlie magazines. He had set up a rating system for the pictures and ads in them, a task that had consumed much of his time. Robert obviously hadn't been playing wargames and making models all the time in his private room. Police found eleven looseleaf binder pages containing nearly 1,000 separate entries on pictures and ads in those magazines.

Robert had catalogued every magazine he had, from 1967 to 1975. There wasn't a single mistake in the eleven pages. Everything was listed in neat columns and even the typing margins were perfect. The separate pictures, centrefolds, or ads were rated one to five. This was the numbering system Robert had set down: "1—very, very good; 2—mighty good; 3—good; 4—so-so; 5—not too good." An example of the meticulous method Robert used in rating the contents of his magazines is shown for many of the months in 1972 and 1973:

1972 (cont.)	
August (cont.)	
199 Cartoon	3
203 Cartoon	2
205 Cartoon	1
223 GIRL !!!	1
	1.8
September	
Cover !!!	1
34 GIRL !!!	1
95 Cartoon	2
99 Campus Sex	4
108 Vargas Girl	2
122 Centerfold	2
135 Pictorial	3
157 Pictorial !!!	1
202 Cartoon	2
203 Ad—Nude	3
235 Cartoon	1
	2
October	
COVER	1
87 Black and White Fucks	2
101 Girl	2
121 Cartoon	3
136 Bunnies	2
	2
November	
58 Ad	2
111 Pictorial	2
134 Centerfold	3
158 SEX IN CINEMA	2
172 Cartoon	2
236 Cartoon	3

265 Playboy Calendar 2

2.3

December

66 Playboy Ad 3
166 CENTERFOLD!! 1
206 Sex Stars 3
237 Cartoon 3
343 Playboy Calendar 2

2.4

1973

January

51 Playboy Ad 2
79 Cartoon 3
86 Pictorial 4
124 Centerfold 3
165 Playmate Review 4
192 Pictorial 2
210 Cartoon 3
237 Cartoon 4
249 Playboy Calendar 2

3

February

76 Pictorial 3
100 Centerfold 2
178 Cartoon 4
211 Ad 3

3

March

COVER !!!! 1
45 Playboy Ad 3
82 Pictorial 3
106 Centerfold 1
135 Pictorial 4
148 Pictorial 3

2.5

April

96 Linda Lovelace 3
118 Centerfold 3
147 Dayle Haddon 2
235 Cartoon 3

2.8

May

97 Sex and the Automobile 2
122 Centerfold 3
149 Pictorial 2
157 Cartoon 4
173 Cartoon 3
215 CARTOON !!!! 1

2.5

June

13 AD !!! 1
100 Pictorial 2
109 Cartoon 2
112 Pictorial 3
120 RUTHY ROSS !!!! 1
152 Playmate of the Year 2

1.8

July

73 Ad 3
83 Pictorial 2
106 Centerfold !! 1
120 Pictorial !!! 1

128 Ad 2
148 Pictorial 3
147 Pictorial 3
159 Ad 2
164 Cartoon 3

2.2

August

Cover 1
14 Ad 1
81 HEATHER MENZIES !!!! 1
96 T-Shirt Pictorial 1
101 Cartoon 3
103 Centerfold 4
126 Ad 3
132 Porno Chic 2

2

September

16 Ad 2
105 Pictorial 3
119 Cartoon (Girls Sucking Girls) 1
121 Cartoon 3
128 Centerfold !!! 1
151 Cartoon 2
162 Pictorial 3
169 Vargas Girl 4
177 Pictorial 4
242 Cartoon 3

2.6

October

24 Ad–RUTHY ROSS !!! 1
59 Cartoon 2
93 Pictorial 4
114 Centerfold 2
132 Bunnies 2
154 Vargas Girl 3
161 Ad 2
215 Ad 3

2.4

November

75 Drawing !!! 1
102 Ursula Andress 4
124 Centerfold !! 1
137 Pictorial 3
150 SEX IN CINEMA !! 1
165 Pictorial 3
183 Ad 2
257 Anny Fanny Fucked 3

2.3

This sort of listing is constant for the nearly 1,000 entries. As is shown, each month is given an average, the average for the month of August, 1972 being 1.8. According to the master list which accompanied the ratings, the following magazines were included: *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Oui*, *Gallery*, *Genesis*, *Mayfair*, *Nugget*, *Cavalier*; there was also a miscellaneous category.

Other writings included mention of the sex doll he had ordered which he hoped might stave off his desire to rape and kill a girl and then kill himself: "7/5/75—'Everything' (?) doll arrived a big disappointment."

The inflatable doll, Robert's last resort, hadn't worked.

He also wrote about his shyness towards girls and the difficulty and frustration he felt in trying to meet them: "Today is September 5, 1972, a Tuesday. This is being written at 11:57:10 P.M. There are some girls at school that I would love to be good friends with but I know that I am still too shy to go up to talk to any of them. I wish I could overcome this fear of women. Robert Poulin 11:59:47."

In that note Robert's handwriting turns into an open scrawl, almost as if he was angered or losing control when he wrote about wishing to overcome his fear of women. On October 27, Robert Poulin would overcome that fear.

In another notation on a sheet of paper Robert wrote: "24/4/75—Today I found out that beautiful girl that rides the 77 lives at ———" (address left out at discretion of authors).

There were other writings in the room, including some Kelly had never had explained to him. One was on a burned looseleaf folder: "A tragedy is a play of suffering and conflict in which a great man is brought to destruction, partly through a flaw in his character, but mainly through circumstances beyond his control.

life and death
rescue
chance to be a hero
choice
passengers
conscience
inquiry not under
arrest"

On another sheet of paper was a list of books and items with prices beside them. They appear to have been taken from ads in his magazines. Some of the books and items included: *Oral Sex and the Law* – $14.95; *Nudes in Color* – $6.00; *Naked Women* – $6.00; *The Pin-up* – $12.95; vibrator – $3.98; Out of Order stickers – $1.00.

The exhibits, including the doll, were kept in a room at the hotel used by investigators. But it didn't matter now where they were kept; they had made their impact on Ottawa. The full extent of Robert Poulin's problems was hitting home.

At this point there were still people who wanted to believe that Robert Poulin had just happened on his own. Everything was all right, they said, Robert was just an abberation, the kind of tragic figure that emerges on his own once in awhile. No one in particular, nor society in general, should be condemned as a contributing factor. That's what some people wanted to believe but that wasn't the way it was. Robert Poulin's twisted mind had been a shock to everyone, but it had been spawned by ordinary social values. No single element was directly responsible, but they all contributed to the final product.

That's what the people of Ottawa found hard to accept. They didn't want to hear that things they had tolerated for so long had helped shape the tragic events of October 27. But Ormston knew it to be true. The Robert Poulin incident was symbolic of much in society that is not proper, yet is accepted. That was the one lesson that Ormston and Cotnam wanted to come from this. The question was, would anyone get the message?

Chapter Four

PORNOGRAPHY: A World Without Love

What is happening in society is that we want instant sex, instant coffee, instant pleasure, instant everything.

—Dr. Edouard Beltrami

Imagine coming home one evening and two of the most gorgeous female creatures you have ever laid eyes on are relaxing in your living room—totally naked — without a stitch of clothes — smiling — patiently waiting for you. 'Hi,' they coo, 'you big hunk of man; come in and join the party.'

Well you had better be prepared because Judy and Susan can make your most erotic fantasies come true! These two action packed dolls have learned to be totally submissive—completely responsive to your every command! So, you're invited to jump right in and have yourself an orgy. There is no limit to these girls' capacity! They'll take everything you've got! They're both designed to serve you—the master—and no one else—except, of course with your permission.

Judy and Susan are human-like in almost every detail. Their flesh-like vinyl skin is smooth and lovely to touch. Both SEX MATES are perfect in every way . . . each one a full, life-size 5'4" with large 37" voluptuous breasts. . . .

This is a portion of an advertisement for a $19.95 sex doll available from a company in California and sold by mail order through magazines circulating both in the United States and Canada. On the full-page ad is the picture of two attractive, half-naked women, one white and one black. The two are obviously human, and according to the smallest print on the page, are the actual live models from which the "Sex Mates" were fashioned. It would be easy, in fact, to mistake the women for the dolls themselves, or at least imagine the doll to be similar to the real thing.

The advertisement is typical of many which try to sell inflatable sex dolls, and probably like the one Robert Poulin saw in the spring of 1975. He may have seen this kind of doll as the answer to all of his sexual problems, but when it arrived, the disappointment was overwhelming. The doll had just not lived up to the boy's expectations. Across the North-American continent, a similar story may be repeated thousands of times each week and most people probably discover the hard way that plastic sex dolls are not what they're made out to be. Some only lose the money; others, like Robert Poulin, lose much more.

On the morning of October 28, the Ottawa media had been running psychological assessments of Robert Poulin. Experts from local universities had been contacted for their opinions, and with the help of superficial, over-night information, tried to give a stunned population some insight into what may have motivated the hideous events of the previous day. As wise as the experts may have been, too many vital facts were missing. Without knowledge of Robert Poulin's obsession with pornography, no one could have given even a remotely accurate analysis of his mind.

The influence of pornography on Robert soon became obvious. He had hundreds of so-called soft-core magazines showing naked women and several hard-cor

publications that depicted bondage, among other things. By handcuffing Kim Rabot to his basement bed, Robert had been acting out his book-world fantasies and thrusting aside all the semblance of reality he had ever possessed.

The two psychiatrists eventually called in to investigate the case were Drs. Gordon Warme and John D. Atcheson of the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto. The doctors gave this assessment of Robert's sexually perverse fantasies:

"There is evidence that in early adolescence, Robert Poulin made attempts to establish heterosexual and other peer relationships. When these efforts failed, he increasingly withdrew and descriptions of him as a loner during the past three or four years speak to his isolation. The evidence available indicates a major preoccupation with fantasy rather than reality. This was cloaked by his efficiency in academic pursuits, by his excellent work record and by conformity to his religious system. These activities do not demand human intimacy and personal sharing and serviced to disguise his intense inner loneliness. In addition he displayed a pleasant and cheerful demeanor.

"It is our contention that during the last year, Robert Poulin was caught up with increasingly intense sexual fantasies as reflected in his diary, wherein he describes murder, rape and violence. This was also demonstrated in his accumulation of pornographic literature and pornographic devices. It is clear that there was a mounting pressure to translate these fantasies into action. Again and again, Robert gave evidence of his struggle against complete withdrawal. Many of his thoughts, as documented by his diary and other writings, concerned girls at school and, failing to make contact with them, he desperately sought real contacts by way of a newspaper advertisement. It seems to us that Robert gradually and relentlessly conceived a plan by way of which he could

live out in the real world, the bizarre fantasies that h had so long concealed. Although still able to cognitively develop a detailed plan for the fulfillment of his fantasies, these acts indicate that Robert Poulin no longer appreciated the full implications of such behaviour and the reality and worth of his victims."

The psychiatrists came to that conclusion, and others, after spending many hours interviewing members of Robert's family. Information gleaned from those talks, coupled with the knowledge that the boy had surrounded himself with erotic and pornographic magazines and books, provided the basis for the one and only definitive assessment of the eighteen-year-old's mind. Material that is available to anyone, at any time, in the majority of North-American book and food stores, had helped turn Robert Poulin into a perverted, sadistic murderer.

Experts disagree on what effects pornography has on the human mind. Studies on the subject have proven inconclusive, and it is a psychiatric field in which much work and research has yet to be done. The most comprehensive evidence to emerge so far came from the 1970 report of the United States Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, and it was from that study that Warme and Atcheson drew this passage:

". . . . A study was made of the exposure to pornography and its relationship to sex activities of groups of sex offenders and others. In all, nine separate groups of male subjects were studied and compared. They found that the rapists were the group reporting the highest 'excitation to masturbation' rates by pornography both in the adult (80%) as well as teen (90%) years. Considering the crime they were imprisoned for, this suggests that pornography (with the accompanying masturbation) did not serve adequately as a catharsis, prevent a sex crime or keep them off the streets. Fifty-five per cent of the rapists report being excited to sex relations by pornography. When reporting on peak experiences in exposure to pornography during their teens, 80 per cent of the rapists report 'wishing to try the act' that they witnessed or saw demonstrated in the pornography exposed to them. This is far higher than with any other group. When asked if in fact they did follow through with such sexual activity immediately or shortly thereafter, 30 per cent of the rapists replied 'yes'."

The Toronto doctors' use of the United States Commission quote did not, however, indicate the numerous views expressed within its final report. Although that report admitted that pornography had effects on human beings, it recommended not a ban, but instead, a massive educational drive to help youngsters in particular develop a healthier attitude towards the subject. In other words, the warped ideas often presented by pornography should be countered by accurate, open information.

Pornography is a multi-million-dollar industry with material being sold in the form of books, magazines, and films—not to mention sex dolls, vibrators, handcuffs, chains, whips, and others. These so-called aids are bought as the result of written suggestion—either direct advertising or within the text of a magazine or book. Most experts on psychology agree that saturation in sex can lead to boredom, boredom can lead to greater perversion, and that that leads on to a greater expansion in the sale of pornography. One point they also stress, however, is that pornography has different effects on people.

Tests have shown that people who are unfamiliar with erotic materials can become confused when exposed to them, but sexually experienced people, with liberal attitudes, remain virtually unaffected.

Some of the facts brought out by the United States Commission report were fascinating, and showed great conflict, not only among the experts, but also among the general population. Surveys of psychiatrists, psychologists, sex educators, social workers, and similar professional workers showed that a majority in those groups believed

that erotic material had no harmful effects on either adults or adolescents. Fifty-eight per cent of police chiefs, however, had the opposite view, and believed that obscene books played a significant part in causing juvenile delinquency. Research indicated that younger persons, particularly the college-educated, the religiously inactive, and the sexually experienced, were aroused by erotic material. Older people were less affected.

As something that had a direct effect on sexual behaviour, the report had this to say about pornography:

"When people are exposed to erotic materials, some persons increase masturbatory or coital behaviour, a smaller portion decrease it, but the majority report no change in these behaviours. Increases in either of these behaviours are short-lived and generally disappear within 48 hours. When masturbation follows exposure, it tends to occur among individuals with established masturbatory patterns, or among persons with established but unavailable sexual partners. When coital frequencies increase following exposure to sex stimuli, such activation generally occurs among sexually experienced persons with established and available sex partners. In one study, middle-aged married couples reported increases in both the frequency and variety of coital performance during the 24 hours after couples viewed erotic films. . . .

". . . . Other common consequences of exposure to erotic stimuli are increased frequencies of erotic dreams, sexual fantasy, and conversation about sexual matters. These responses occur among both males and females. Sexual dreaming and fantasy occur as a result of exposure, more often among unmarried than married persons, but conversation about sex occurs among both married and unmarried persons. Two studies found that a substantial number of married couples reported more agreeable and enhanced marital communication and an increased willingness to discuss sexual matters with each other after exposure to erotic stimuli. . . ."

The presentation of erotica can also have much to do with the human response. Films and photographs of sexual action turn more people on than do written words or erotic stories. Women, often thought to be less responsive to erotic material than men, are, according to research, just as much affected by it, although they tend to be disgusted or offended if the sex is not presented in a romantic situation.

The report went into various sides of pornography, including those aspects of human sexual behaviour that had the greatest stimulating effect on men and women. These included nude females petting, males torturing females, males in their underwear, males and females masturbating, nude males, nude females, cunnilingus, fellatio, and partially clad homosexual petting. For either sex, cunnilingus, female masturbation, nude heterosexual petting, and something called "dorsal-ventral" intercourse, were rated high.

The permutations are many, but in reading this—the most detailed report on obscenity and pornography ever produced—it seems difficult to relate much of it to Robert Poulin, a slightly overweight, pigeon-chested adolescent with few of the physical attributes that are considered important by youngsters of that age.

Perhaps the most important and relevant sections involve the Commission's insistence that education in sex is the best way out, especially since human beings have no solid proof, one way or the other, of the harmful effects of pornography. In a way, the Commission members were saying that pornography is like a commonly used poison for which there is no known antidote. Therefore, the only way to combat it is by teaching people the dangers of using it. The Commission summed up its thoughts in this way:

"Sexual information is so important and so necessary that if people cannot obtain it openly and directly from legitimate sources, and through accurate and legitimate

channels, they will seek it through whatever channels and sources are available. Clandestine sources may not only be inaccurate but may also be distorted and provide a warped context."

Some adults talked to in the Commission studies had received their sex education from other children as youngsters, and even among today's adolescents the majority of sex information probably comes from peers and not from older people. This was the American way, they said.

"This trend towards delegating some responsibility for sex education to the schools is approved by a substantial majority of adults in our country. The amount of support for sex education in the schools varies among different segments of our society, however: People who are older, who have less formal education, and who have conservative attitudes towards sex, are less likely to support sex education.

"Young people report dissatisfaction with the sex information they get both at home and at school. They say that at home, parents are frequently embarrassed or uninformed and most do not talk openly and honestly about sex, while at school, the information they are given tends to be irrelevant, insufficient, or is made available too late. In the absence of satisfactory information from preferred sources, young people tend to turn to their friends and to books and periodicals although they recognize that these may not always be reliable sources. Young people would prefer to receive information from more appropriate and more reliable sources and in a more timely fashion, and think that more responsibility should be delegated to schools.

"Most desired sources of sex information are not necessarily more reliable. Parents, a preferred source of information, are often neither well informed about sex nor expert in communicating with children. Formal courses in sex education are relatively new in universities

and colleges and there are few teachers who are well prepared for imparting sexual information to young people. Studies indicate that physicians are often no better informed about some significant aspects of human sexuality than the generally educated citizen and may be no more at ease discussing some sexual matters. This is also true for some professional religious workers.

"Training of professionals in sex education must overcome not only the absence of adequate information about sex, but also existing attitudes which inhibit the open discussion of sex without embarrassment or titillation. The experience of the two medical schools and the private training institute suggests that the use of pictorial depictions of explicit sexual activity with discussion provides not only information, but also a reduction of inhibition and embarrassment in talking about sex. It should be noted that a similar finding was obtained in some of the experimental studies of the effects of explicit sexual materials.

"Many schools have implemented sex education programs in the past few years and these represent a wide variety of approaches in terms of content and context. Some courses start in elementary school and continue through high school, while others are initiated only in junior high or even senior high school. Some sex education courses are integrated with other courses, and some are separate courses under a variety of different titles. The content of different courses varies from principal focus on comparative structure of reproductive systems, to focus on the social content of sexual activity, to emphasis on moral sanctions constraining sexual expression. Thus, there is little professional consensus regarding the appropriate scope of sex education.

". . . . The recency of the introduction of sex education into the curriculum and the pluralism that exists regarding the definition of goals, content and context, have resulted in the almost total absence of empirical research

aimed at evaluating programs of sex education. The Commission has been able to discover only two formal studies. One is still in the process of data analysis and no results are as yet available. The other indicates that girls who had a particular sex education course were less likely to have illegitimate children than girls who had not taken the course and that boys who took the course were less likely to be divorced later, at the time the study was conducted, than were boys who had not had the course in sex education."

The general attitude of the Commission was one of liberal toleration of pornography, although it recommended that "offensive" material be kept away from public thoroughfares, and out of the way of children and young persons. But some members took less liberal views of the whole matter. They claimed that pornography had an eroding effect upon society, public morality, respect for human worth, attitudes towards family love, and on culture. In a separate statement, they labelled pornography "loveless", and claimed it degraded the human being and reduced him to the level of an animal.

So even on the same Commission, important as it was, there was conflict. There are not many experts who would deny the need for more research into the subject of pornography and its effects on the human mind.

The Commission's proposed legislation removing pornography from public thoroughfares described it as ". . . any pictorial or three-dimensional material depicting human sexual intercourse, masturbation, sodomy, direct physical stimulation of unclothed genitals, flagellation or torture in the context of a sexual relationship, or emphasizing the depiction of adult human genitals . . ." The definition excluded works of art and subjects of anthropological importance. News racks were to be included in public thoroughfares.

Although many experts believe that the majority of "normal" people can be exposed to pornography without

being seriously affected by it, a disturbed, or potentially disturbed person, may be affected differently. Seemingly harmless magazines like *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Oui* and *Nugget* are usually classed more as erotic than pornographic. Over the years, however, they have evolved from showing girls in bathing suits to depicting, albeit usually in a subtle manner, numerous sexual deviations.

The University of Quebec in Montreal has the only university department of Sexology in North America. There, research is being done to study sex scientifically, in an effort to get at some hard facts and to release sexual research from the world of theory. Much work has been done in the past on animal reproduction and procreative sex, but little is known about sex as a form of pleasure and as a means of communication between two people. Edouard Beltrami, a young French-born professor in the department, calls the university's sex studies a multi-faceted approach to a subject that up until now has been looked at in bits and pieces. Sociologists have investigated sex on a mass scale without going into individual patterns, while psychiatrists and biologists have looked at other unrelated aspects. These groups, together with psychologists and anthropologists, are working together in an effort to gather scientific evidence on that most basic of human activities.

Dr. Beltrami points out that scientific evidence on the subject is still hard to come by but patterns are beginning to emerge that are gradually taking the department's conclusions beyond the stage of theory. He says that soft pornography has become more explicit over the years because of a type of boredom that its mass availability has created.

"There is a kind of subtle equilibrium in the minds of people that if something is too free it's not interesting, but if it's prohibited, it's slightly interesting. My personal feeling is that we are going too far in this field, in the sense that at one time in *Playboy* for example, you had

only the breasts shown, then you had the vulva shown. That's okay, because if you want pornography, why not? It's part of the woman. But then all the other magazines wanted to do the same thing, so we have the present situation where the revues are going further, and falling into homosexuality, orgies, etc. And what about the movies in which a woman is actually killed? I'm not surprised about that because if the law is too easy, then there is an escalation in the number of prohibited things and if the material is only deviant material, and a guy is only immersed in that, he is programming his brain too strongly and there isn't enough counter-material to balance his influence."

Dr. Beltrami uses the metaphor of the brain as a computer to continue his explanation:

"If someone tells you you're good, it's a program, and if someone tells you you're bad, that's another kind of program. And there's a hierarchy of programs. If someone you don't know tells you you're a nut, you take no notice, but if a psychiatrist tells you the same thing, you pay more attention. If you lead a balanced life with sleep, relaxation, daydreaming, and physical exercise, all the programs will interact against one another and bring something normal. If you play sports all the time, it can be worse than playing none at all, and if you're an intellectual and nothing else, you may develop some problems. If you're obsessed by the same idea as this boy Poulin, and think only in terms of achievement, it's not good."

Bearing in mind this balance, Dr. Beltrami says that fantasy is desirable, and even necessary in achieving a normal sexuality. Fantasy with a lover is not enough, because there is a need for something that goes beyond normal values, he says. It is important that the majority of people know the difference between fantasy and reality —something that, in the final analysis, eluded Robert Poulin.

"A lot of people have no fantasies because they believe that, for example, if they have an adulterous fantasy, they should act it out immediately. That's a problem we have to deal with—to show people that they can read an Eaton's catalogue without buying everything that's in it. It's not bad to buy a travel catalogue and if you can't afford the trip you usually don't go. But at least you know what it's like. On the other hand, only by reading can you find out that a country is not for you. The more you read about it and the more you know, the less you are going to be disappointed. And this happens in sexual fantasy. Sometimes a person will have a fantasy about a woman who is good looking, and then he sees her five years later, sees what's happened to her, and says, 'Well, I was better off with my wife after all.' Or like a doctor who can have a fantastic sexual fantasy about a beautiful patient and then he finds out she has gonorrhoea. It's a kind of training, a game. You get more experience if you have the fantasy."

Perverse sexual fantasy is a different thing, says the doctor. The more perverse fantasy present in the human mind, the more likely it is to be acted out, although it has been shown that the fantasy present during the last four seconds before orgasm is most important. If it is discovered that a homosexual masturbates with homosexual fantasies, but in those last four seconds shifts to a fantasy about the opposite sex, then he or she can be treated. Many homosexuals are reconditioned through this method if they wish to change.

The strength of a normal heterosexual relationship is important in combatting the possibility of fantasy getting out of control. Either that, or in the case of a young person, the intention of ultimately having a heterosexual relationship. But there is as yet no real way to measure how much fantasy is bad and how much is good. Dr. Beltrami adds:

"There are a lot of people who have ordinary fantasies. This appears pretty regularly for a person who has a normal interest in life. Usually it applies to the kind of life he prefers. If a man is married, he will have 90 per cent heterosexual fantasy—even if 80 per cent of it is towards someone else other than his wife. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as he doesn't take his fantasy for reality. If he meets a girl, he may be attracted to her, but it doesn't mean he has to be untrue to his wife. Some people feel badly about having fantasy and they have to find some defect in their wife to justify that they have this fantasy. That's another of the main problems we have to face—people just don't allow themselves to fantasize. So basically, a person may have lots of fantasies without any problem, but if they are all towards a certain pattern like rape, then a person may be in trouble."

Dr. Beltrami feels that publications like *Playboy* originally made such an impact on the magazine market because, instead of depicting prostitutes (as was usual in the fifties), Hugh Hefner, *Playboy*'s publisher, turned to the girl next door. Says Beltrami:

"In the fifties, having fantasies about a prostitute was something only a little bad, but to have this kind of fantasy about the neighbour who seems to be all neat and clean and everything made a guy feel more guilt-ridden. The magazines insisted on making up and showing these clean girls in the nude—a girl the reader could meet anywhere. Soon, however, the girls got too neat.

"Most of what you see in *Playboy* will be erotic when you know the life of a girl. When you know what she's doing, her feelings and so on, and then you see her in the nude, then I would call that erotic. But if you see only her breasts or her vagina, but know nothing about her, except that she's fucking or something, then I would call that pornography. In some magazines there is a false

depiction of girls—enhancing their beauty, for example—because it would be boring otherwise."

In other magazines it is not difficult to spot the silicone, or see the scars of the breast operation, he adds.

In a more subtle assessment of pornography today, the Montreal professor explains away "progress" by relating it to sheer social boredom and the North-American desire to want everything in black and white.

"What is happening in society is that we want instant sex, instant coffee, instant pleasure, instant everything. You can see the problem in a simple thing like the little boy who goes to Disneyland and has a great time, but as soon as he leaves he becomes depressed. The more you have, the more you want and the more you get, the more your brain gets dull.

"It's the same with a clitoral orgasm. A vibrator is very effective and a woman capable of orgasm will nearly always be excited. But it's not a proven fact that the satisfaction is better, and we even have evidence to the contrary. A woman gets more satisfaction with fewer orgasms, if she has a man. To avoid instant pleasure though, we need good training and a lot of time and patience."

Beltrami feels tighter restrictions on the availability of pornography would be a good thing, because it would help people's sexuality. Stricter rules generally would help create a greater subtlety in today's modern society.

"We have lost a lot of the rituals of life. Some time ago, if you wanted to buy pornography you had to do something special—belong to a club, have a membership, hide a little. It helped build up your fantasies. Now, you just might buy a *Playboy*—because it's there. The availability prevents people from thinking about it and it's very important to build up your fantasy about something before you get pleasure from it."

Beltrami says he now meets men who have no interest

in women but who regularly have sexual experience. A conversation he had with a furnace repairman went something like this:

Beltrami: How would you go about asking for relations?
Man: I speak to her.
Beltrami: And then what do you do?
Man: I say undress yourself.
Beltrami: And then what does she do?
Man: She undresses herself.
Beltrami: And then what do you do?
Man: I fuck.
Beltrami: How do you do it?
Man: Oh, I don't know, I just fuck.
Beltrami: And then what do you do?
Man: I dress myself.
Beltrami: And what does she do?
Man: She dresses herself.

Comments the Sexologist: "Of course, he doesn't get any pleasure from this because it's very shallow and simple. The guy is a pervert. It's just lack of education. Not just the mass availability of pornography, but the mass availability of everything without preparation. Instant action without thinking about it."

Beltrami lays part of the blame on Robert Poulin's faith in the "everything doll", on publicity, and on the technology orientated society that infers that objects can replace people.

From the boy's diary and other writings, Beltrami concluded that Poulin had been psychopathic, and the fact that he could switch immediately from a world of fantasy to a world of reality supported that theory. The doctor found it significant that Robert felt guilty about failing his biology exam but not about killing his parents.

"Instead of having relations with a girl, he just wanted to rape her. That may be something he took out of the books. They tell you more about how to have sexual

relations with a girl than how to understand them. Usually people like this are so afraid to have social intercourse with people that if a girl had said 'yes' it would have been very frightening for him. It's very important that he directs everything that's going to happen. He knew that sexual relations were something a girl would not want to happen so brutally; he would be leading and she would be afraid, and obviously not leading. If she (Kim Rabot) had agreed to do it, he would not have known what to do next—but as long as he kept her frightened, then he was leading."

Beltrami says the same thing happened in Vietnam with American G.I.s who were exhibitionists and who showed their penises to small Vietnamese girls.

"The girls are afraid, so the man unconsciously thinks he is a big man and has a big penis and that the little girls are afraid of him. The purpose of the act is to appear aggressive, but in Vietnam, when girls are embarrassed or shy, they laugh. The G.I.s took this as the girls saying, 'Ha, ha, you haven't got a big penis, it's just funny.' And it stopped all the behaviour of these exhibitionists."

Beltrami says the bondage material owned by Robert Poulin explained the use of the handcuffs. But the bland manner in which he responded to his mother when she asked about the eye appointment, indicated he had no feelings left at the time. The killing of Kim and the shootings at St. Pius were all part of a very clear-cut scenario; Robert Poulin wouldn't have done one without the other.

There are quite likely more Robert Poulins in the world, says the Sexologist, but if pornography did in fact have the effect that it seemed to, only education and discrimination by the individual, could help.

"In a society where the trend is towards individual liberty, people have to choose the material they want to see and to educate their children in the same way." As Beltrami says, everything is permitted in society except

hurting your neighbour, so perhaps rules should be tightened up so that people get a pleasurable feeling out of doing something prohibited, when in fact, it's not so bad in social terms.

Customers in the majority of the pornography stores are more often than not homosexuals and there is an increasing number of books and magazines directed to that market. Stories and pictures of big, musclebound supermen appear to be the favourite.

According to owners, ordinary family men make up the remaining customers. Quite often they are from out of town, but sometimes they are shopping on their own territory for bondage books that give the theory, and handcuffs that facilitate the practice. Bondage is popular in North America these days and the source of most Canadian information on the subject comes from the United States. Customs inspectors seldom object to the books because few totally naked bodies are ever shown.

Adult bookstores do a good business but are continually subjected to what owners call "hassle by the police". Law enforcers really do little except regulate the degree of pornography sold because they realize that the legal definition of pornography is so blurred. A good lawyer can easily prevent a store owner from being convicted in court.

Robert Poulin bought his hard- and soft-core pornography either through the mail or from stores around Ottawa. Some were regular supermarkets; others were the average neighbourhood corner stores and "adult" bookstores. The latter are strange, seedy, almost unreal places that the majority of people walk past many times in a day and never notice. They sell magazines in sealed plastic wrappers to officially discourage browsers, but the only chance a legitimate customer has of seeing the contents of these magazines is by paying for one. (Don't try to tell the owner of an adult bookstore that you can't judge a book by its cover. Sometimes, they will ask you

for a one-dollar entrance fee, returnable only if you make a purchase of three dollars or more.)

In the back of many adult pornography shops, movies are shown at a quarter each in booths about the size of an individual portable toilet. The movies are pathetic, feeble attempts at arousal and probably only lonely people take them seriously or are disappointed and frustrated by them. (In many areas depiction of physical contact in these minute flicks is banned and regular police raids keep the content in line with the law.) The films projected from behind the viewer's head onto the closed door of the booth are often comprised only of a woman gyrating, running her hands through her hair, and generally making facial attempts at being seductive. Perhaps the average person would be tempted to say, "What do you expect for twenty-five cents?"

Dealers in magazine and book material invariably agree that during the past few years, business has gone down hill because of the mass availability of soft-core pornography at a much lower price. But the fact that a lot of money is still being made on the "adult" market perhaps bears out Dr. Beltrami's point that people need that little bit of excitement that is inherent in doing something slightly risqué.

Certainly, we should be looking at the observations of people like Dr. Beltrami for the answers. In the strictest social sense, he is a liberal, like the majority of people in Western society. But beyond that, he realizes that society is in danger of being trapped and tortured by its own sense of freedom. The University of Quebec's Department of Sexology is attempting to augment theories with scientific facts. It is to be hoped that when that happens, we will still be able to listen.

Chapter Five

GUNS: An Awakening

We believe that present-day attempts to curtail shooting have one aim in mind: the eventual elimination of firearms from the hands of law abiding citizens.

—Firearms and Responsible Ownership (FARO)

Some 80 per cent of all the gun deaths in this country are at the hands of someone who has never before committed a criminal offence.

—Lowell Green

When Robert Poulin walked through the old Ottawa market area called Lower Town on Thursday, October 23, he was taking the first tangible step in the hideous pathological plan that had been forming in his confused mind during the preceding months. His destination was a store called the Giant Tiger. There, they sell everything from bars of soap to guns. Robert wasn't interested in the soap.

On his way in he passed the store slogan that read, "Where Your Dollars Make More Cents", and the numerous multicoloured signs that shouted the news of bargain prices to the customers. Robert approached Gerald St. Louis, a clerk at the gun counter, and in no time was walking away with a Winchester Model 2200, pump action, twelve-gauge shotgun, Serial No. L877371.

A cash payment of $109, along with presentation of a birth certificate that proved the boy's identity had completed the transaction. Robert headed home, walked down into his basement through his garage and sometime between then and the following Monday, sawed fifteen inches from the twenty-eight-inch barrel. He must have known that when you shoot into a crowd, a sawed-off barrel would spread the gun pellets in a wider arc.

After the school shooting, it had taken police four days of intense search to trace the source of the weapon. They called the many Ottawa gun dealers and eventually were fortunate because the Giant Tiger store—unlike many gun dealers across the country—happened to keep complete records of all gun sales.

The ease with which Robert Poulin had purchased his lethal weapon brought about renewed cries from gun abolitionists and equally vociferous defences from hunters' associations and gun clubs. The old arguments once again emerged, backed by statistics and facts that were used by both sides to present opposing views. The often-heard dictum that statistics can say anything you want them to say was never more true than in this case of opposing viewpoints.

For the first time though, some startling facts issued by the federal government were made public and completely destroyed the myth that Canada is a relatively gun-free nation. For those previously ignorant or disinterested in the gun issue, some of the facts were as amazing as they were educational. The government, represented at the Poulin/Rabot inquest by RCMP Sergeant Roy Hoban, pointed out some of the following:

1. There are an estimated ten million rifles and shotguns in Canada.
2. There are about 700,000 revolvers and pistols.
3. Two- to three-million Canadians own guns.
4. Two-thirds of murders involving firearms are committed with rifles and shotguns which are not subject to any legal controls.
5. In 1974 there were 1,500 gun-related deaths in the country, including suicides, murders, and accidents.
6. Fifty per cent of Canada's murders involved guns.

And as many Canadians heard these figures for the first time, questions were being asked. Would stricter gun controls have prevented the tragedy of October 27? If legally, Poulin had been made to wait a couple of weeks before receiving the weapon, would things have been different? Would he have thrown a petrol bomb into the classroom instead of using pellets? Or would he have cooled off and forgotten the whole thing? The speculation went on ad infinitum. Most people had opinions but nobody really had answers. Abolitionists thought a total ban on guns was the only way to prevent another Poulin episode, but the gun enthusiasts say it wouldn't have mattered a bit.

Perhaps the largest gun-lobbying organization in Canada is Firearms and Responsible Ownership (FARO), a group dedicated to nothing else but exerting political pressure to preserve what it says is the right of every law-abiding Canadian to own a gun. It is a politically orientated movement representing many votes and thus, a source of influence.

During the 1976 Parliamentary hearings on gun control, FARO lobbied in almost every conceivable way to prevent the ". . . ultimate confiscation of every privately owned gun in the country". Briefs were presented to Parliamentary committees and newsletters sent out to all its members. The Poulin affair would not have been stopped by tighter controls, it says, because nobody could ever have known that the boy was a time bomb. If money and time had to be spent they argued, leave guns alone and spend the money on finding reasons why Poulin and other people like him had such unrecognizable problems.

As an example of the organization's stand against those who wanted gun controls, these excerpts from a newsletter attacking the "opposing" National Firearms Safety Association, is typical:

> Over the years, FARO has intentionally refrained from saying that confiscation of all firearms was the real intent of the opposition. However, such intent has now been revealed by many of them, as their end goal. Just what do you think the real effects of the collective views outlined would be if they were implemented? Face it fellow firearms enthusiasts, it's time to stop kidding ourselves . . . THEY WANT YOUR GUNS!!!

FARO fired this line to members of shooting sports:

> That you are so often, implicitly or explicitly, referred to, or treated as potential social dangers should bother you. That you are so often equated with the kooks, social misfits, and criminals should bother you.

And a few more:

> Never mind attempting to understand why they are insisting on "gun-control"—just remember—their view of gun control leads eventually to no private ownership!
>
> Legislation which purportedly will "keep firearms out of the hands of the incompetent and/or unbalanced" again implies that you (the responsible firearms owner) could well be included in that group, so defined.
>
> We believe that present day attempts to curtail shooting have one aim in mind: the eventual elimination of firearms from the hands of law abiding citizens.

FARO rejects any suggestion that it is tied in with United States gun manufacturers (the sole provider of Canadian guns) or any other organization in the United States. It is, say officials, representative of shooting, hunting, and

fish and game clubs, and of collectors and individuals from every walk of life. It includes professionals, individual law-enforcement agencies, the military, and ordinary citizens. There is no corporate backing.

In an interview, FARO's national president, Bill Jones, presented his argument:

"We have no connections with the States, no connections with gun manufacturers, or political affiliations—we fly no flags. I am a firm believer that if a man wants a gun he should have every right to have one unless he is known to be some kind of nut. What we are really discussing in this whole thing, is the validity of YOU. Are you or are you not a good citizen? If you are, and if you are a contributor to the social structure—if you do that by honest means and endeavor, and you pay your taxes—you are then known as a good citizen. That is, of course, if you are not an imbecile. What a good citizen owns, provided that he bought it with his own legal money, is nobody's business. That's a fact we have to recognize sooner or later. What he uses, after he's purchased it (provided he does not impose upon you or anybody else, and is no threat to you or anybody else) is certainly of no concern. And it's that simple. I won't defend a gun, but I'll defend completely my right as a good citizen.

"The government is afraid to face up to the truth. The proposed government legislation will do nothing to the criminals and the criminals are not worried about it. A criminal by definition is operating outside the law. Politicians are afraid to face up to the truth. And the truth is that we've lost the handle on society by and large. We've gotten away from fundamentals. We've not punished crime enough.

"Gun control has forever been a free plank for any politician who didn't want to make sense on real issues or choose to get his face in the paper. It was a free issue. He didn't have to know what the effects of his comments were. He didn't have to research."

PRIVATE OWNED GUNS

GOING . . . GOING . . . GONE

UNLESS

YOU ACT POSITIVELY, DECISIVELY, IMMEDIATELY

The Government's "Peace & Security" Bill, C-83, was tabled in the House on February 24th and received second reading March 9th. Now we know the name of the game. Bill C-83 contains the Government's blueprint for the gradual elimination of most privately owned firearms.

IF THIS BILL IS PUSHED THROUGH IN ITS PRESENT FORM:

Some Guns* Will Go Immediately . . .

*All Full Autos

Some Guns* Will Go Later . . .

*Firearms for which a definable "need" cannot be established.

And There is Every Likelihood That Sooner or Later YOUR Guns* Will be Declared Illegal And Subject to Confiscation.

*Order of Governor-in-Council, under Bill C-83, will be given the authority to reclassify any type of firearm at any time. Example: Overnight "restricted" firearms could be reclassified as "prohibited" firearms. This means that, overnight, your legitimately owned handgun could be declared illegal.

Some of the more significant features contained in sections of Bill C-83 devoted to Firearms Controls:

A LICENCE will be required to own firearms and ammunition. It will be only good for 5 years. Every purchase of ammunition must be recorded by the seller. Every person in a business concerning firearms must keep a record of every transaction and a running stock inventory. Section 102.1.

You are liable to imprisonment for 2 years if you "possess" a firearm or ammunition without a licence. Section 88.(1).

A "firearm" includes "any frame, barrel, receiver, breech block, firing pin or hammer". There is a similar penalty for "every one who sells, gives, lends, transfers or delivers any firearm or ammunition to an unlicenced person." Section 95.(1).

This means no relative or friend, unless licenced, can make any purchase or delivery on your behalf, deliver a part of a firearm to a gunsmith for repair or, even temporarily, store or transport a firearm for you.

A REGISTRAR will issue licences and will have absolute power to decide if you can have a licence. He can also arbitrarily control in any manner he wishes, even if not provided by legislation, how you may use, carry, possess, handle or store any firearm or ammunition. Section 106.3 (16).

CIVIL LIABILITY—If your guns are stolen and subsequently misused, you can be held responsible and be liable to 5 years imprisonment. Section 99.(2).

FEES: Entire costs of the programme to be borne by the gun owner. No fee is stated—$5.00 or $500,00?

NEW LAWS may be brought in overnight by Cabinet order only, without any Parliamentary notification, debate or vote. Section 106.8.

IT'S UP TO YOU

No one is the only person who can stop this happening. It is up to you. Whether you are a firearms dealer, collector, competitive shooter or once-a-year hunter, remember that the key to good firearms legislation is your M.P. Write to him today. As your elected representative, inform him of your deep concern over the inclusion of these excessively restrictive gun control measures as part of an omnibus "Peace and Security" package. (Bill C-83) insist that he ensure that no new legislation affecting legitimate firearms ownership is implemented without the inclusion of straightforward, unambiguous guarantees and safeguards designed to eliminate all possibilities of misrepresentation and misapplication by local administrators or by individual members of law enforcement agencies or the judiciary.

Do you want these arbitrary and unnecessary firearms controls pushed through uncontested? Even if you've written to your M.P. before, write to him again. Don't let him mistake your silence for assent.

FARO

This advertisement has been sponsored by FARO (Firearms and Responsible Ownership), an Ottawa-based, non-profit organization comprised of concerned Firearms enthusiasts. For further information, write to: P.O. Box 2436, Station "D", Ottawa, Ontario, Tel. 613-272-2343.

During the Poulin/Rabot inquest, Dr. Cotnam threw fuel into an already blazing argument when he suggested that many hunting accidents might have been homicides in disguise. It would be easy, he said, for one hunter to deliberately shoot another and almost impossible to prove. As a result, a gun club in the doctor's home town of Pembroke, Ontario, called on provincial Premier William Davis to fire the coroner for his "slanderous allegations" against hunters. Davis wrote to Cotnam asking for an explanation and Cotnam replied that he could think of at least a dozen cases in his twenty-six-year career as a coroner that would fit the bill. He had checked his files and come up with a couple of examples.

FARO's president Bill Jones said that Cotnam had carried his job to extremes and he made the point that there had been a gun in the Poulin household already. Therefore, the fact that he chose to buy another one made it purely an academic matter.

While FARO campaigns for the right of citizens to own guns, the Canadian Wildlife Federation is concerned more with looking after the hunters' interests. The Federation has a quarter-million members across Canada and although its official policy is generally close to that of FARO's, it disagrees on several basic points.

Surprisingly enough, the CWF is in favour of restricting weapons so that each person who wants to own a gun should have to go through a firearms education course and pass written and practical tests before being issued a permit to buy the gun. That stand is stronger than any ever proposed or taken by the Canadian government. Federation head, Kenneth Brynaert, presents almost a liberal line of thought compared to that of his FARO counterpart, Bill Jones:

"I believe that there are an awful lot of people buying firearms today that just wouldn't bother if they were required to pass tests and go to classes. You wouldn't get the impulse type buying like Poulin's. There are people

who go into a store and see a rifle on the wall and say, 'That would look good over my fireplace, in my den or something.'

"Maybe then, it's bought for one purpose and ends up being used for another, whereas the person who has a genuine interest in a legitimate sport such as hunting or target shooting, is buying it for specific purposes. In one sense such a regulation would place an inhibiting factor on the gun buyer. It means he would have to take the initiative.

"The chronic alcoholic wouldn't go through that rigamarole and the person that was unbalanced might be detected during a course. So both would be weeded out one way or another."

The Canadian government makes the point that such testing is impractical because licensing is the responsibility of the provinces. Brynaert counters by saying that most of the provinces would be receptive to such a move and some, including Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec already have legislation requiring tests to be passed before hunting licences are issued. "All we have to do is take it one step further," he says.

"The availability of guns is a problem but we feel that this testing procedure would reduce that availability—especially among those who just want guns for the sake of it. There are certain crimes of passion where a person in the heat of the moment can go into a store, buy a gun and ammunition and do his deed. No, I don't think there's any law that could be drafted to prevent totally that type of crime but our proposal could help. Crimes of passion will always occur be they with a gun, knife, axe or whatever. If a person is bent on mayhem, they can, even with a packet of matches, do worse damage than with a rifle. You can't legislate morality. One should remember also, that in the case of Robert Poulin two crimes were committed: one with a gun and one with a knife."

The gun abolitionists' view that Canada will one day become a carboncopy of the United States is rejected by most firearms enthusiasts, including Brynaert's federation:

"I hate using comparisons and I hate using statistics, but you look at Switzerland where every man over the age of eighteen is legally required to keep his army rifle and ammunition in the home. That country has one of the lowest crime rates in the world. It's the social condition within a country that dictates people's attitudes towards law and order. In Switzerland, there is a high employment rate and a relatively high standard of living. Then look at the Japanese crime rate and consider the fact that private citizens are prohibited from owning weapons. That says something. The basic question is, how do you make people live within the law? Certainly the answer isn't to pass more laws."

Canada's new gun-control law, first presented in 1974 as part of Bill C-83 (the Peace and Security Bill) had to be watered down by the Liberal government in the face of Parliamentary opposition. In the summer of 1977 it passed as Bill C-51. Even then, a year's delay on the imposition of gun-buying regulations was agreed to by the government as a concession to the bill's opponents. The whole gun-control debate had been used as a political football until the final Parliamentary debate, when it passed—a beaten and battered shadow of its former self.

The CWF accepted the final draft of Bill C-51 and formally halted its opposition to the government's proposals in early 1977.

Says Brynaert: "We have yet to find any law-enforcement agency or body which agreed that the original proposals would have made a good law. There are, of course, officers who think that the portion that now bans fully automatic weapons is good, and the Federation agrees with that too . . . I guess it will put a lot of pressure on gun collectors though.

"This proposed bill (C-83) was designed to make

people feel better and nothing else. It wasn't going to inhibit criminals or stop all crimes of passion. It's just that people would think that the government was doing something when in fact it was not."

Brynaert, however, disagrees with Jones' statement that the government's ultimate intention is to ban guns completely.

"If anything" reasons Brynaert, "the government will try to discourage people from owning guns; it will try to discourage hunting and other gun sports. Underneath, the politicians may have an anti-gun sentiment but I could never see a total ban coming."

During the hearings on gun legislation held in the spring and summer of 1976, the government was lambasted from gun groups all across Canada. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, during a visit to Vancouver earlier in the year, expressed surprise that the issue had drawn so much response—particularly since most of it was from the negative side.

Most of the gun groups considered the proposals of Bill C-83 a deliberate political attempt to ease the pressure on C-83's sister bill, C-84 (the Capital Punishment Bill). If that was the case, the Trudeau administration succeeded in so much as publicity was often steered away from the hanging issue. But it's unlikely that such vocal opposition to the gun-control measures was ever anticipated.

In its presentation to the Commons and Senate committees in 1976, the Shooting Federation of Canada, representing about a quarter-million sports shooters, also insisted that the proposed law would do nothing to stop criminals. Instead, it would just harm the three million gun owners across the country. To back up its claim, it quoted from three United States studies. The first was a paper published in the *New York Law Forum* (now the *New York Law School Law Review*) in 1967. It read:

"A fundamental assumption of those who support the drive for stricter regulations of firearms is the belief that easily available weapons are a stimulus to crime and that absence of the weapons would significantly reduce criminal activity. In our own inquiry, we have discovered no convincing evidence on the question. However, the opinions of knowledgeable people suggest that considerable caution be used in hypothesizing a close and causal relation between firearms and the commission of crimes. In the published materials and in our interviews, there is a respectable body of opinion that legal restraints on weapons have little effect on crime and criminals."

A social study conducted at the University of Wisconsin by Douglas R. Murray, was also quoted by the Shooting Federation, along with back-up material released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in July 1966. Murray summarized his study by saying:

"This paper explores the relationship between access to handguns, gun-control laws and the incidence of violence associated with firearms. Utilizing F.B.I. data, census materials, vital statistics and Harris and Gallup surveys in a multiple regression statistical framework, gun-control laws have no significant effect on rates of violence beyond what can be attributed to background social conditions."

The F.B.I. crime report quoted by Murray, listed many factors at work on the shaping of potential criminals, including density and size of the local population, economic status and educational background of the individual, effective strengths of local police forces, social attitude to law enforcement and a few other things, but *not* (pointed out the Federation) the availability of firearms or gun controls!

For added effect the shooting fraternity also dismissed the commonly heard theory that political assassinations have increased because of the televising of United States

political killings. The first televised assassination was that of Japanese Socialist Party Leader, Inajiro Asanuma; and he had been knifed, they said.

And perhaps for amusement more than anything else, the Federation added: "No senator need be reminded that Julius Caesar did not die from gunshot wounds."

In an alliance with FARO, the Canadian Shooting Federation hit out at the constitutional erosion it claimed would result from the new gun law (C-83). The government's intention to give police officers the right of entry into anyone's home, even without a search warrant, could have grave consequences in the future. Again, they went to the United States for an apt quotation to back up their claim and came back with a couple—one from Michael Franck, Executive Director of the State Bar of Michigan and one from Senator Sam Ervin Jr. of North Carolina.

Franck: "It is always easy to conclude that a problem is so critical that constitutional rights must be abandoned to solve it. That's the rallying cry of every movement towards a closed and controlled society. When we permit someone else's constitutional rights to be curtailed today, we are paving the way for our constitutional rights to be curtailed tomorrow."

Ervin: "The concept embodied in the phrase 'Every man's home is his castle' represents the realization of one of the most ancient and universal hungers of the human heart."

The Federation used a statement made by eighteenth-century British Prime Minister, William Pitt, to sum up its stand on invasion of privacy:

"The poorest man may in his cottage bid defiance to all the force of the Crown. It may be frail, its roof may shake; the wind may blow through it; the storms may enter, the rain may enter, but the King of England cannot enter; all his forces dare not cross the threshold of the ruined tenement!" [*Speech, Excise Bill*]

For the National Firearms Safety Association, all this opposition is strong, almost overwhelming. NFSA was formed in mid-1975 at the instigation of Ottawa talk-show host, Lowell Green. The Brampton school shootings in May of that year caused pangs of anxiety among many people who had previously ignored the issue of controlling guns. Green formed the national organization and at the time predicted, "the same thing could happen in Ottawa." He was right.

The only good words for the Canadian government's proposed legislation in 1976 came from NFSA but compared to that of the gun groups, its political clout was feeble. NFSA's position is that controlling firearms is only common sense.

"To many Canadians, it comes as a shock to discover that guns are so easily accessible (to almost anyone) and that we do not have an effective system of firearms controls. Why are we so shocked? Simply because this does not make sense. A firearm is clearly a lethal item and, therefore, most citizens have trusted that the use, etc., of these weapons has been strictly controlled for the safety of all Canadians. It is not that they necessarily hate guns or fear them. It is not that they think that people who own guns cannot be trusted. Why do we control anything? Because the possible misuse of some items presents more of a danger to society than others. It's all just plain common sense. That's our position."

The Association attacks FARO for its "frightening emotional outbursts" and adds:

"Our society should not consider itself to be so helpless that it cannot devise gun laws that will have at least some effect upon the criminal element. It is reasonable to expect that difficult access to firearms will cause some criminals to turn to less deadly weapons in order to commit their crime. The possibility of death or serious injury resulting from the crime is thereby reduced. Also,

the knowledge that firearm offences will be punished severely will deter some persons from using a firearm in a criminal act. Why should criminals receive their firearms on a silver platter? Why not make it more difficult?

"New firearms policies are admittedly only a part of the solution to our violence problem, but it would be ridiculous for us to, therefore, say that we should not implement such policies. Some lives will definitely be saved. Some injuries will certainly be prevented. There will be fewer gun threats and we will feel a little more secure."

NFSA also quotes statistics that show that Canada is second to the United States in per-capita homicides and compares laws from country to country to show the relative effectiveness of those laws. Japan (also quoted by FARO) has restrictions far beyond those of Canada and deaths by firearms in that country are much lower. The Association too, goes down south for a supportive statement from the United States. In its brief to the House of Commons committee, the Association used a statement by Franklin E. Zimring of the University of Chicago, who was Director of Research for the United States Task Force on Firearms (1968-9).

"Serious assault with a gun," said Zimring, "is five times as likely to cause death as a similar attack with a knife, the next most dangerous weapon. And gun robberies are four times as likely to result in the death of a victim as are other kinds of robbery."

Lowell Green, in an appearance before the Commons committee and after pointing out what he called inconsistencies in statements made by FARO and the Canadian Wildlife Association, had this to say:

"Another aspect I find disturbing in the debate over gun control is the attempts at confusing the issue which are often made by various groups with vested interests in free and easy access to guns. The continual claim for example, that the government plans to register all firearms

is an obvious attempt at confusing the issue. The continual claims that gun controls won't keep guns out of the hands of criminals is another attempt at confusing the issue. We agree that criminals will probably always have access to guns, although that's no reason we should just hand them to them with a nod and a 'thank you very much'. The issue here—and it's obvious for all to see—is those millions of rifles and shotguns lying around Canadian homes which are only too frequently used in a moment of passion, to murder, maim and commit suicide —guns incidentally which only too frequently are left within the easy grasp of children. Some 80 per cent of all the gun deaths in this country are at the hands of someone who has never before committed a criminal offence."

So vitally important was the gun aspect of the Robert Poulin and Michael Slobodian cases that at both inquests, Drs. Atcheson and Warme were moved to comment. The psychiatrists stated quite simply that only police, military, and Canadians who need to hunt to live, should be allowed to carry arms.

Although it is known that policemen within the same cities have opposing views on the subject, Ottawa's Superintendent Tom Flanagan took a similar stance and agreed with the psychiatrists.

The issue of guns and gun control is an emotional and confusing one. To an outsider with a desire only to be left alone to live in peace, the emotion must seem confusing and the confusion strangely emotional. One has only to hear the hot-blooded rhetoric, listen to the irrelevant theories, and read the twisted statistics to justify that observation.

Although Canadian gun and hunting associations claim autonomy as soon as the United States is mentioned, there is a definite, albeit tacit interrelationship. Strictly speaking, the two countries' organizations are probably

not connected and doubtless Canadian gun groups look after Canadian interests first. But in the same way as Indians see no boundaries between Canada and the United States, there is a brotherhood of gun enthusiasts across North America that sees things in the same light. After all, U.S. companies, or their Canadian subsidiaries, provide the guns for the continent—and of course, most of the cars. (In anticipation of an argument, the car, although a greater domestic killer than the gun, is unemotional subject matter, and within the limits of present technology is a necessity to our way of life. Under existing living conditions, how many hunters could honestly say that they would starve or even be in difficulty without their weapon?)

Hunters insist that theirs is a sport just like any other. If you ban guns, why not ban fishing rods, or golf clubs, or baseball bats? In their way, all of these items can be used to bring about either human or animal fatalities. At that point the argument splits yet again because some anti-gun groups are motivated primarily by concern for human life and others by concern for animal conservation. The animal conservationists have an easier time presenting their argument because evidence is on their side. But those who relate the proliferation of privately owned firearms to the increasingly violent, gun-orientated crime rate, have a more difficult job convincing their opponents.

North-American crime rates have increased in the past ten years and so has the number of North Americans owning guns. But can those two facts alone be automatically related? Ken Brynaert's comments about the state of society ("You can't legislate morality") bears thinking about.

Canadian and United States gun enthusiasts share a monthly "bible" called *Guns and Ammo*—a magazine out of Los Angeles that is continually pumping out anti-

gun-control propaganda in one form or another. Many issues carry letters from Canadians, including this one from an Ontario man in an issue during the summer of 1976. It is headed "WARNING FROM CANADA":

> Being a subscriber to your magazine, I am well aware of the present concern over gun control legislation, and feel that the present state in Canada might concern your readers. At the present time [1976], legislation has been introduced into the House of Commons in Ottawa which, aside from giving broad powers to the police and removing capital punishment from the statutes would unduly impose rather stiff restrictions upon the hunters, target shooters, and collectors of this country. It is unfortunate that a government encourages the breaking of laws by otherwise law-abiding citizens and ensures that criminals have a nice soft life in our "correctional institutions" at the cost of the suffering of the citizens of Canada. For those of you in Canada, start writing to Ottawa and continue to do so until satisfactory action is taken. For those of you in the United States, look to the north and realize the seriousness of the situation that is trying to take your rights away from you, and then prepare yourselves for the struggle.

That letter from one individual is typical of the thousands being sent in to the pro-gun magazines and, what's more important, typical of the massive response governments in both countries get as soon as gun control is mentioned. The anti-gun groups and individuals are not nearly as inclined to react in that way and their failure to help develop a mass public counter-argument is where they fall down.

But the pro-gun people in their enthusiasm and determination to see justice done tend to tie themselves up in rhetoric. Quite often, they put out all the "right to bear

arms" clichés within the space of a column before going on to present some of the most ridiculous, nonsensical drivel imaginable.

An article in that same issue of *Guns and Ammo* is a good example of a pro-gun writer trying to wring a new angle out of a subject about which pretty well everything has already been said. The author turns to the American Declaration of Independence to support his justification of private gun ownership: "We hold these truths to be *self evident*, (author's italics) that all men are . . . endowed by their Creator with certain *unalienable* (author's italics) rights . . . among these are Life, Liberty, . . ." And he continues:

> How about that! The men who built this country thought that a person's right to live—to literally remain alive—was obvious and something that no one (except presumably his Creator) could take away from him; his right that is, not his life. We all seemingly still agree with them because we still teach it in our schools. (Of course, we still teach democracy too, but that's fodder for another article.) Anyway, the point is this: How can there be such a thing as a right to life unless the right to *defend* (author's italics) one's life is implicit within it? If this isn't intuitively obvious to the reader, then no amount of further elaboration is likely to make it so.

He goes on to say:

> A second argument for gun ownership, which probably won't be taken seriously at first, is that it's natural. Please don't laugh; instead, think. One is hard pressed to name a species that Nature hasn't provided with at least one means of physical defense, either (a) camouflage, or (b) external weaponry, or (c) heightened sensory abilities, or (d) all of the above. Man is probably the only creature that could be listed for which the correct response would be (e) none of the above.
>
> But Nature didn't totally abandon us to the Fates. If she didn't give us the eyes of an eagle, or the claws of a cat, or the concealability of a rabbit or deer, she did give us our brain. Nature, in her wisdom, probably allowed that a superior intellect would be able to devise a means of self defense far more effective and efficient than inconspicuous coloring or claw. And she was right; the mind of man created the gun. Now a few of the weaker ones would have us believe that we no longer need a means of defense at the personal level. They would have us believe that our various law enforcement agencies can protect and defend us. But can they? Have they? The front page of any newspaper has the answer. And why haven't they? Basically because, all other reasons aside, the police can only go into action, by law, after the fact. Ask any victim.

Such articles and opinions are common in this magazine —the gun owners' *Playboy*. Without detracting from the deeply held beliefs that these people have, one has to wonder how far such fatuous, almost childish arguments can go before they start defeating their own purpose. For someone not caught up in the emotion of it all, the time when reasonable, serious consideration can be given to ludicrous analogies must be running out.

The National Rifle Association, a long-time, experienced and effective campaigner against gun controls in the United States, sent out an advertisement several years ago. Under the headline "DADDY, WHAT WAS A HUNTER?" were the silhouetted figures of a father and son. The rest of the ad read:

> YOU ARE IN DANGER! Picture yourself sitting in front of a cheerful fire, telling your children or grandchildren about . . . the year hunters became

extinct. Make no mistake. It could happen—because there's a huge wave of anti-hunting sentiment building on the horizon, right behind the anti-gun wave that has already come booming in.

Canadian groups are comparatively inexperienced in fighting gun legislation when compared to the giants south of the border, but they are learning. FARO, for example, has obviously borrowed style, if nothing else, from the U.S. pro-gun campaigns. The organization's literature gives that fact away.

FARO chief, Bill Jones, a dedicated man working for a cause in which he passionately believes, might well be right when he says there is no way legislation will halt crime involving the violent use of firearms. Society quite likely would have to change dramatically before criminals would lay down their arms forever.

Yet when the anti-gun-control people talk in philosophical generalities, a few basic points are skimmed over. The gun, when all is said and done, is a quick and efficient means to an end: the argument that if a firearm was unavailable, a criminal would use a knife or something else doesn't always stack up. According to Dr. Cotnam, there would certainly be substantially fewer suicides if guns were not available, because although people quite often have the urge to kill themselves, they are sometimes choosy about which exit they take. But for every specific point, there is a counter-argument, and because of that the debate will continue, probably for years.

With such black-and-white subjects as gun control or no gun control, there is always a gut feeling hidden away behind all the rhetoric. Even though gun-related crimes might not in theory be reduced by restrictive firearms legislation, is it not true that there is such a thing as a gun mentality in society? People alive today are already stained by existing social imperfections but if those imperfections were removed, how would that affect

generations yet to be born? Legislators' consistent inability to see things beyond their own graves is one of the problems we are faced with. The guns themselves are only a small part of it.

On top of that, would it really be so bad if one day a child asked his father what a hunter was? At least that future child would have no emotional involvement in hunting and presumably he would still have a few animals to look at.

But there are still inconsistencies and double standards. The fact that Canada has probably won more Olympic medals at shooting than in any other sport indicates on one side the acceptance of weapons, both by users and by Canadians who like to see the country win Olympic medals. On the other hand, the government has legally restricted most, if not all, of the weapons used in that sport. And one wonders how many anti-gun people applaud the gold, silver, and bronze medals the shooters win.

But for all the talk, statistics, theorizing, and borrowed quotations, nobody can really say for sure whether legislation would have saved Kim Rabot, Mark Hough and Robert Poulin. The act of buying the weapon would have been delayed, but would that have stopped the ultimate act? It might have and it might not have . . . that's the best anyone can say right now.

Shortly after the tragedy, hundreds of people in Ottawa handed over their firearms to police for destruction. The movement started off in a highly motivated way, but soon dissipated.

The gun-control arguments and voluntary handing over of weapons will doubtless continue when the next Robert Poulin comes along . . . whenever and wherever that may be

Chapter Six

THE MILITIA: Necessity or Hazard?

The first day the sergeant said, "We're here for a purpose —to teach you how to kill. . . ."

—Bruce Hamill

What Bruce Hamill has to say about the militia doesn't appear in any recruitment brochures. While he was going through militia training with Robert Poulin, the soft-spoken Hamill decided right away that it wasn't for him. And strangely enough so did Robert Poulin, but for entirely different reasons. For Robert, going into the militia as a private was the only alternative left to him after he had lost out on the biggest goal of his life—a chance to enlist in officer training.

Robert wanted to be an officer. He didn't want to have to come up through the ranks and when that was the only alternative left he took it, but only after an argument with his father at the recruitment centre before he had signed up. After a while, however, Robert began to like the militia—the manoeuvers, the military lifestyle etc.—but about two weeks before October 27 he stopped going because he had again become depressed at the prospect of coming up through the ranks. It was this depression that he wrote about in his April 7 diary entry: the final burden that would make Robert snap.

Hamill's reasons were a lot different. After what he

saw of the way seventeen- and eighteen-year-old boys were treated, he decided the main purpose of the militia was to make a few adjustments to your brain: to change your personality and try to make you into a machine. Bruce didn't want any part of that.

That wasn't what bothered Robert. What bothered him was just having gone through the most ego-shattering experience of his life before becoming a private in the Cameron Highlanders. Robert had gone through all the steps required to get into officer training and had never heard anything back. Everyone, including Robert, had assumed that he had made it and when, two days before he was to leave, word finally arrived that he had been refused, he was crushed. The one thing he had wanted in life had just been pulled from his grasp.

Robert came from a military family. His father had once been a pilot, and both sides of the family had a military tradition. If Robert had been accepted as a candidate for officer training and had made a success of the course, October 27 would probably have passed as just another fall day.

For it was vitally important to Robert's self-esteem that he be a success at something. He couldn't achieve any sort of inner happiness until he showed people he was someone important. Robert Poulin would never be the class president, the captain of a football team, or have any of those status symbols that high-school students considered so important. There was a lot of pressure on Robert—pressure from a system that judges people, as Ormston put it, not by how well they get along with other people but how high a mark they get in mathematics.

Stuart Poulin had taken Robert to the interview for officer training. As the two walked along, the father had told his son that he didn't have to be an officer right away, that most men came up through the ranks. Robert had listened but hadn't said anything. His father went on

and had said that often the military prefers people to come up through the ranks so they would learn to take orders before they could start giving them. But Robert didn't seem to accept that at the time and walked into the interview with his plans to be an officer intact. And his plans appeared to have succeeded.

Robert went before a number of boards after his first briefing in January, 1975, on what officer training was all about. There, he had been told the requirements and what sort of marks were needed. He was told by his father that team sports were still a big requirement in the service. A number of interviews followed and finally everyone, including Robert, assumed he was officer material. He had reached a stage most hopefuls usually don't reach, and even the Cameron Highlanders unit that he wanted to join as an officer cadet thought he had been accepted. Robert had even received his dogtags and medical innoculations. He had asked to be excused from his exams at school because he was so sure he would be going on officer training and the request was granted. Robert was on his way . . . or so he thought.

Then, near the end of May, he received word he had been refused. A three-man board had judged him "immature" at that time, but said he could well be officer material in the future. The one thing that might have stopped Robert from putting his diary plan into action was now out of the way. It was just a matter of time, because the officer-training course had been the only thing left that had held out hope for Robert. It would have given him something he had never received at school, at home, or anywhere else: a little attention and respect for something he had achieved.

Robert Poulin was part of a system that puts a premium on being a success, but being a success only in certain ways. Good looks, athletic ability, and a confident manner were all part of it. Robert hadn't had these

qualities so it had been difficult for him to cope. The officer training had been all that was left, and despite his faith, he had been rejected there too.

Robert saw no way of going back to school after being granted the absence. He stayed away for the two- to three-week period and went back in September. He had joined the militia as a private in June, going to Ottawa's Cartier Square Drill Hall for regular training and on an excursion to Ontario's Camp Petawawa.

Terry Chisamore was also in the militia with Robert and the two often talked. Chisamore (who was enthusiastic about the militia), Hamill (who wanted nothing to do with it) and Robert Poulin, spent two weeks together in the same tent at Petawawa. Hamill and Chisamore remembered Robert in the early days as being very detached. He would sit in the lunch room by himself staring off into space. Robert had been timid at first, and would leave the drill hall as soon as the night's activities were finished. But that had gradually changed and within a short time Robert had found the militia enjoyable. Soon he would be offering to help the other boys with any problems they had. Chisamore remembers that once when he was stripping a gun and had gotten confused over where some of the parts belonged, Robert had come over and told him to try to remember what he had learned in weapons drill and then had pitched in and helped put the gun back together.

So Robert Poulin began to get involved more deeply with the militia. The eighteen-year-old boy who had three months earlier mapped out a rape, murder, and suicide plan and who had just seen his life's ambition go up in smoke, joined the militia and learned to become a commando. The commando training he had taken was given after hours and was technically illegal. It had been unauthorized, and militia officials had agreed it was wrong. Often during that summer, seventeen- and eighteen-year-old boys were going to the drill hall to

learn the best way to kill and Robert Poulin had been among them. With or without militia training he would have carried out his October 27 plan but what he had learned those summer evenings had probably made Robert Poulin a little more efficient the day of the tragedy. Chisamore had also taken the commando training. Hamill thought it had been a "bunch of crap". The commando training was given by a young corporal who has since volunteered to serve with British forces in Northern Ireland. Chisamore recalls:

"It's along the line of guerilla warfare type of deal . . . tactics we would use in case war came about. Like the idea was none of us liked the aspect of war, there was no way we wanted to be involved but if we were—like the militia is called out—if they want to fight we were going to end it as quickly as possible."

Hamill remembered it differently. The corporal in charge of his section had said he didn't want his boys having anything to do with the commando training.

The man training the commandos was a danger, as far as Hamill was concerned: "He was really fanatical, he said war is hell and all this but he really enjoyed it." On manoeuvres his teeth would grind, his eyes would get wild, and his features take on a sadistic look. This was the man who would teach Robert Poulin how to be a commando: how to kick down doors, put a rifle to his shoulder and blast away at whoever was inside: something that would come in handy in case of war—or in case a person was just looking for an efficient way to kill people.

This type of thing was exciting, Chisamore recalls: it could really "get the blood going". Everyone on the commando squad worked hard, and was expected to give 100 per cent effort but some of the more enthusiastic ones shot for 110 per cent. And so Robert Poulin had become one of a select group crawling around a drill hall in Ottawa at night, pretending he was sneaking up on

people. He was learning how to kill silently with a knife; the corporal would even blacken the blade of his knife with a magic marker so the enemy couldn't see any reflection. If they gave out marks for creating atmosphere, the man would be at the head of his class.

But the corporal had picked who he wanted for his commando squad. Why had he picked quiet and shy Robert Poulin, a boy who was timid and aloof when he had first walked into that drill hall?

Hamill's answer was "He (the corporal) wanted guys for his commando training who didn't look like killers, who were timid, who were quiet. He wanted the quiet, meek guys who didn't look like killers . . . he wanted to turn them into fighters, start with the tame ones and turn them into killers."

The boys who were in the squad thought differently. They believed that only the best men had been picked. The corporal came around and had picked the twelve best, so they had worked hard to show that indeed, they *were* the best. They wanted to prove that to themselves and to each other. Robert would prove that later, to everyone.

The fact that the commando training was not authorized, and was, therefore, against regulations, wasn't a well-kept secret around the camp. Chisamore had objected that it wasn't in regulations since it wasn't taught during the day, but the corporal's philosophy of war had popped up again and had dispelled the doubts that had clouded the teenagers' minds. War is really hell but if war comes we've got to be ready, Robert Poulin had agreed. Chisamore remembers him saying the commando training would come in very handy if there was a war.

So the commando lessons had continued. Regular militia took all day and then they were back at night to crawl around the drill hall. The young commandos had

taken their new positions seriously; they were, as Hamill put it, "really gung-ho".

Putting the arduous training into practice had been one of the greatest thrills for the young commando squad. Once, while in the small Ontario town of Almonte, in the dead of night they had crawled up to a fellow militiaman's tent, stolen his helmet, and escaped without waking him up. The sleeping soldier had gotten up in the morning and looked all over for the helmet, but it had been too cleverly hidden. Chisamore remembers the incident with pride because there was always a greater kick from doing the "real thing".

The commando lessons were also tested at Camp Petawawa, a services camp and training centre near Pembroke, Ontario, where war manoeuvres for all ages take place. In the summer, the camp is stifling hot, and there seems to be nothing there but dusty trees, sand, and heat. Trucks and jeeps are constantly driving by and soldiers in full battle dress, carrying their guns, are in the fields everywhere. Officers sporting the Forces-style sunglasses walk around with swagger sticks and wear ascots.

It was here for two weeks that Robert, Bruce, and Terry had shared the same tent. There had been night exercises that Chisamore again said had given everyone involved a thrill. For instance, a squad of the young militiamen would try to take an enemy hill at night and the idea was to get up the hill without being seen or heard. The enemy would be an opposing team of militia recruits. Terry Chisamore and Robert Poulin had been on the same team. On one occasion, they had been crawling through the bush trying to reach the hill when somebody had sneezed. Lights flashed on and they were caught. Both boys had been angry. They had crawled all that way only to be given away by a sneeze. Both Poulin and Chisamore thought that putting into practice what you had been taught was important. Robert, in particular,

had agreed that the most beneficial thing about Petawawa had been his chance to act out what they had been taught.

For someone who had joined the militia almost against his will, Robert had changed, and being away from home appeared to be a partial reason for the change. A few times he would mention that after Petawawa he would have to go back home. Those he had spoken to had gotten the feeling that he wasn't looking forward to it. Robert never talked much about his family and when others brought the subject up, he would avoid getting involved. In fact, he rarely talked about his personal life at all. Once, when the conversation had turned to sports, Robert had perked up and said he was a skier and lacrosse player. But the more he talked about skiing, the more it became obvious that he didn't really know much about the sport. He had been lying.

While Robert gradually became more involved with the military way of life and reached a stage where he was actually sleeping with a rifle by his side, Hamill's enthusiasm had waned. He and his friends quit shortly after the Petawawa training. It was "the fanatics and the weirdos" who made up a large number of those who stayed in, Hamill said. He believed the people who took it seriously were immature. The biggest thing he remembered about Camp Petawawa was sleeping on the ground and feeling frozen: "I got sick, a lot of us went home sick. There's a lot of things they have you do and it's just ridiculous and they have you do it because it's the army." Robert, who eventually became one of the unit's crack shots, had applied to go with a militia security unit to be sent to the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, but he hadn't lived long enough to hear the verdict on his application.

Bruce Hamill pointed out that for most of the boys who go into the militia, it was a summer job; an easy way to get some summer cash when jobs were tight. Many

didn't want a military career; they wanted the money. Maybe that was the reason the entry conditions were so easy. There were no psychological tests and no real study of an applicant's background. In fact, an applicant could have had a criminal record and, unless he volunteered that information, there was a good chance it would pass unnoticed.

The evening of October 27 was a training night for Terry Chisamore and his friends in the militia. They were gathered at the Cartier Square Drill Hall as usual, joking around, and moving some furniture to create the space needed for the night's activities. Someone mentioned in passing a shooting at a high school in another part of the city, but no names were mentioned and it was passed off as just one of those things that happens to other people. Chisamore was moving a chair when he passed the radio in time to hear a brief excerpt from the seven o'clock news broadcast and he almost dropped the chair. The announcer said that a boy named Robert Poulin had killed himself after shooting at some of his classmates. It couldn't be the same Robert Poulin Terry thought. It couldn't be the same Rob who just a few days before had been training in that very hall: a person that Terry thought was his friend. The same things were going through the minds of the twenty other boys in the room—in some cases the same boys who had tried to capture enemy hills with Robert Poulin. This was a long way from pretending to shoot people.

The shocked silence lasted for a few minutes. The murmurs of disbelief were heard and what the boys said would later become part of a familiar refrain: Robert Poulin was the last person who would have done such a thing. But he had. Robert Poulin, the boy who had once said that it is good to act out what you learn, had turned into a killer.

As Chisamore heard further details, his mind went back to the commando training. The news reports said

Robert had kicked in the door. Well, they had learned that in the commando sessions; that was the way to do it, Terry remembered. Terry couldn't remember if the knife strapped across the chest was one or not, but he had undoubtedly raised some questions. Questions which were chilling because they carried with them the knowledge that a teenager could evaluate the best way to kill someone. Terry's militia training had allowed him to look at the St. Pius shootings from almost a professional viewpoint.

Rob was a good shot. Why would he just kick open the door and fire randomly if he had wanted to kill someone? He could have killed several people, no problem, thought Terry. Rob had had plenty of time and plenty of ammunition. So Terry had come to one conclusion: Robert Poulin wasn't there to kill anyone in particular and really didn't care about killing that many people in general. Perhaps he was going there to prove something to himself, to make a point to other people.

If Robert had wanted to kill a specific number of people that day his military training had given him the credentials to do the job. It was about two weeks before October 27 that Robert had begun to lose interest in the militia. He started coming in late and then not coming at all. When he did come in, he appeared depressed but it was "nothing drastic, like he was mad at the world or anything," recalls Terry. By that time, Robert Poulin was fully into the depression he had said it would take to launch the diary scenario. Even then no one could spot it. Robert just looked a little down, that was all. He'd come out of it, they all said.

Colonel Albert Cooper, the reserve officer in charge of the militia for the Ottawa area, told the inquest about the activities recruits are involved in. In the Ottawa area, there are 1,800 youths receiving military training and across Canada a total of 12,000. Being seventeen years old is the first and most important qualification, and

beyond a superficial background probe—during which a candidate can reveal just what he wants about himself—there is no real checking done. Psychological testing for youths who are to be instructed in the use of firearms is not considered necessary.

While the militia does not check out its recruits thoroughly, the same apparent lack of interest is taken in its instructors. At the inquest, Colonel Cooper said he didn't know about the commando training, and if it did go on, there had been no authorization or approval given by the proper authorities.

Bruce Hamill can remember the commando trainer and a sergeant hitting the new recruits on the back of the head when they did something wrong or didn't do it fast enough. One recruit got kicked, and on one occasion a sergeant told the boys he was willing to "take on" anyone there. Bruce thinks again that he and his friends put up with a lot in the militia that was simply wrong. Ormston asked Colonel Cooper just what the purpose was in training seventeen-year-olds to use weapons when a complete study hadn't been done on their background and considering they might never join the services anyway. The colonel said that that was the policy set down by the federal government. He agreed he felt a little uncomfortable at the thought of seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds capable of killing under those circumstances.

Colonel Cooper, an old friend of Stuart Poulin, first met the boy in May, 1975. The colonel was on the three-man board of review that talked with Robert for an hour and then decided he was too immature for officer training. Poulin had been recommended by the head of the Cameron Highlanders—the unit he was trying to join as an officer cadet—as possibly a suitable candidate. The interview had not been an easy one. Robert was nervous and it was difficult to get complete answers from him. None of the three members of the board had had any psychological training but it was the way Robert had

presented himself that had earned him the immature rating. He had said he played lacrosse and was active in sports. The board couldn't tell if he was lying—it was always possible to fabricate facts. There was also some question at that time of Robert's sincerity about the military, that he might be using the course to see if he was interested in continuing on in the services. Whether Robert was going into the military to satisfy himself, or whether he felt he had to because of the family background, only he knew. But he had wanted to join as an officer, he had worked hard for it, and now it was gone. The disappointment was the same, no matter what the reason.

Mike Mageen met Robert in the recruiting centre when the two were in Grade 12. In mid-October, 1975, they talked about the militia and the role it was expected to play at the Montreal Olympics. The two joked around and teased each other because of their conflicting military interests. "Pongo" was the name Robert had given to artillery enthusiast Mike, and in turn, Robert, because he was more interested in the infantry was nicknamed "Grunt". The boys saw each other for the last time on October 27, 1975, but they didn't speak. It was during an afternoon theology lesson . . .

In contrast to other students who thought that Robert Poulin had remained virtually expressionless while shooting wildly into classroom 71 that day, Mageen said he had noticed a definite smile. Mike remembered his militia friend still smiling when he turned the gun on himself. . . .

No one involved in the Poulin/Rabot case would say that the militia was one of the key reasons for the whole thing. That obviously wasn't the case. But like so many other areas that Robert Poulin had touched, it was now seen in a new light. As Dr. Cotnam asked, "Is the militia a necessity or a hazard?" Ormston put it more directly. In this day and age what reason can there be for teaching seventeen-year-old boys how to use weapons? Especially

since most of them never go into the army. Robert Poulin had proven the danger in one way: if an unstable person wanted to kill somebody with a gun, he could get into the militia with ease and be taught to do it more efficiently.

Added to that, the militia can make quite an imprint on a developing young mind. The knowledgeable use of weapons and military tactics can give a person the same feeling of power that learning karate often gives to beginners. As Terry Chisamore put it: "You hear about things where people rob banks and everything and you think to yourself, you know that's kind of stupid. Had they done it this way it would have worked. But not to the extent of, you know, boy, now that I know how, I can go out and rob a bank."

Drs. Atcheson and Warme looked at the militia aspect in a general way. They focused on the training of persons in the use of weapons generally. And in doing so they took a healthy swipe at the myth that the more a person knows about guns the safer he or she will be in handling them. If anything, the opposite was true. Knowing how to handle a weapon increases the threat that that person potentially poses.

Their report to the inquest in part read: "It is urged that no one be so naïve as to assume that careful training of gun users could prevent tragedies such as this one. Both Michael Slobodian and Robert Poulin had received intensive instruction in the handling of weapons. Both had been described as unusually scrupulous in their handling of guns. Indeed, one could argue that their training contributed to their dangerousness."

The coroner's jury made no mention of the part-time military units in its final summary and although this was interpreted by militia authorities as a clean bill of health, it is possible that the jury simply forgot about it. During the inquest, Dr. Cotnam expressed concern about the militia, as did Ted Ormston, who made it part of his

closing address. He confronted the jury directly with one repeated question: In the nuclear age, what is the sense of training boys to shoot guns? But the jury had never responded.

The original officer-training plan that Robert wanted to get involved in is described in a recruitment brochure as something that would develop a man's potential as a leader and as a decision maker, and that would help increase his self-confidence and self-reliance. Robert was a decision maker. He had decided that he had nothing left to live for.

Chapter Seven

THE MEDIA: Mirror or Motivator?

Naturally, the full spate of coverage given the shooting and subsequent events led to cries of sensationalism by some members of the community. There is no question that there was "sensationalism" because the very nature of the tragic events was sensational.

——Gordon Eastwood, Ottawa *Journal* City Editor

BRAMPTON—At 16, Michael Slobodian said he was fed up with life. Wednesday, he entered the Centennial secondary school with two rifles concealed in a guitar case and went directly to a first floor washroom.

He had sworn in a suicide note to kill two teachers who had reprimanded him for skipping classes and "anyone else who got in his way". He wasted little time in carrying out his vow.

OTTAWA—St. Pius X Grade 13 student Robert Poulin burst into his theology class on a shooting rampage Monday afternoon, less than an hour after police found the burned body of a young girl in the basement bedroom of his Ottawa South home.

After shooting wildly into the classroom and injuring six of his fellow students, Poulin shot himself in the head and died instantly. . . .

Eye witnesses at the school

John Slinger, 17, who walked unaware into the washroom, was the first victim. He staggered into the hallway and collapsed dying.

Michael, firing at random at students with two rifles, then approached the art room where he shot and killed Margaret Wright, 25, one of the teachers on his death list.

After wounding another student nearby, he committed suicide with a single shot in the head.

Before he died, he killed two persons and injured 13 students—nine seriously.

said Poulin—the "quiet boy of St. Pius X"—burst into the classroom at around 2:30 P.M., just 15 minutes into the afternoon theology lesson.

He kicked open the door and started shooting into the classroom with a sawed-off 12-gauge Winchester, pump action shotgun. As the pellets flew, the students dived for cover amid screams of panic.

The shooting, according to students lasted about two minutes, and Poulin left the room, went into an outside corridor and shot himself in the head.

——From The Canadian Press and United Press International reports

The only pieces of information missing from these two stories are the datelines. The first, from Brampton, appeared in Canadian newspapers on May 29, 1975, and the second five months later on October 28. It is entirely

possible that Robert Poulin had read about and copied the actions of Michael Slobodian.

After the Poulin affair, cries were renewed that the media was to blame. By publicizing (and some say, sensationalizing) the Brampton shootings, newspaper, television, and radio reports instilled a similar idea in another deranged mind. Defenders of the media say that if Robert had not attacked his schoolmates with a gun, he would have used a gasoline bomb, dynamite, or something else. Perhaps he wouldn't have gone to the school at all. He might have decided instead to murder someone else—his parents or neighbours perhaps or someone who happened to be walking past his house. Who knows?

But facts are facts and in the final analysis there seems little doubt that Poulin's actions mirrored those of Slobodian.

The reason the two incidents can be related with such certainty is that in the April 7 diary entry, in which the Ottawa youth mapped out his master plan, there is no mention whatsoever of his school, or any hatred he may have had towards fellow students and teachers. It seems likely that if St. Pius had been part of Robert's plan in April, he would have written about it. Therefore, he may have picked up the idea sometime between April 7 and October 24, the date he bought his gun from the Giant Tiger store in lower-town Ottawa. There can be doubt of course in a case like this, but the similarity of the two shootings and the time element make that margin for doubt quite slim.

Many people outside the media disagree with a newspaper's handling of certain stories but rarely appreciate the other side of the issue. Working journalists, often criticized for being callous and unfeeling, also do their fair share of soul searching. Inside newsrooms, heated arguments are by no means uncommon. Reporters complain to editors if their stories are changed, editors complain to the mechanical men if mistakes are made in the finished

product, and the mechanical men complain to everybody about a variety of things. This attitude, especially on the editorial side, results from pride and involvement in the job and any newspaper that doesn't breed constant working demands from its employees will ultimately be a second-class newspaper. Any Executive Editor who rejects or ignores them is not doing his job properly. Unlike many working people, journalists actually see from day to day what they produce as do the many thousands of readers who buy newspapers.

But as with most other organizations and businesses, newspapers have policies, guidelines, and rules which have to be adhered to, however loosely. Among these is a preconceived idea of what people want to read about. In this way, journalists act as amateur psychologists who base their decisions on experience, style, and above all else on the fact that they are human just like everybody else. Sometimes they are wrong and make poor decisions, but more often than not they succeed in capturing the interest of a majority of readers.

If it is accepted that Robert Poulin got his ideas from reading and hearing about Michael Slobodian, does that make the news media guilty of gross irresponsibility? If it does, then one must also ask where Michael Slobodian got his original idea from. The answer to that is by no means clear.

Activity in the newsroom of Ottawa's two major dailies, the *Journal* and the *Citizen*, was at a low ebb about 3:30 on the afternoon of October 27, 1975. The two editions of both newspapers were on the streets and many of the newsmen who had been working since the early hours of the morning were on their way home to enjoy what was left of the afternoon. The working days in newspaper offices are long, energetic, and often exhausting. Behind the stories and headlines lie dozens of hasty, uncritical decisions, some of which please readers while others do not.

Newspapers are a powerful force in any community, whether they circulate in a small town, a city, or are distributed on a national basis. They have huge responsibilities to keep people informed, interested and entertained. They may even protect people from the jack-boot attitudes of governments and big business, who, without fear of possible public exposure, might be tempted to trample over the majority to achieve their ends.

Perhaps the most important of those objectives is to keep people informed and entertained from day to day. With that in mind, the paper has to decide what interests a reader most, and what, out of the thousands of stories that pour into its office every day from all over the world, should that person be informed about. According to the group mentality of most editors, the answers to those choices are very subjective. On the entertainment level, people seem to be interested mainly in other peoples' lives. On the information level, readers are interested in government or official organizations, but only when their actions have a specific effect, in a certain area of their jurisdiction.

For example, if a government states that inflation will be increasing by a certain percentage, then only a minimal number of people may feel deeply affected. But if the statement adds that bread, milk, cheese, and cars will be hiked in price because of the inflationary increase, then everyone feels involved. Newspapers appreciate that it is impossible for all their readers to have expert knowledge on every subject they cover and they will usually try to spell out the implications.

It is a safe bet too that across North America and probably the world, more people prefer to read about Betty Ford's breast cancer than about her husband's statement on inflation to Congress a few days afterwards. The same thing probably occurs with Margaret Trudeau, who is quite naturally affected by some of the things that touch most ordinary people. If, on the same day, the

Prime Minister made a policy statement to the House of Commons, and his wife went out for a high-kicking night on the town, which story would be the most heavily read the following day? Anyone who says the Prime Minister would capture more attention is kidding himself—unless, of course, he was resigning, declaring war, or announcing a general election.

There are publications, like *Midnight* or the *National Enquirer*, that deal exclusively with the personal lives of famous people or with the lives of ordinary men and women who have something unusual happen to them. A look at the circulation figures of those two tabloids would tell immediately where the interests of many thousands of people lie.

But the more serious newspapers are for the most part conscious of the responsibility they have in creating a balance between information and entertainment. People have to be warned if they are in danger or told categorically if their lives are about to be forcibly changed. What they do with the information is of secondary concern as far as a newspaper is concerned. Once the information has been imparted, their job is done (at least theoretically). It is with those thoughts in mind, that most good journalists approach a day's work. Monday, October 27, and Tuesday, October 28, were no exception.

In a city like Ottawa, the news usually flows smoothly and for the most part, tomorrow's stories can sometimes be predicted today. But newspapers write about life and people, and because neither can be totally predictable, most editorial offices have contingency plans to cope with emergencies such as natural disasters, air crashes, train crashes, assassinations and murders. One of the ultimate tests of a newspaperman is how he copes with a big, fast-breaking news story.

The story of Robert Poulin began to unfold slowly at both Ottawa dailies. In their respective newsrooms, *Journal* City Editor, Gordon Eastwood, and his *Citizen* counterpart, Scott Honeyman, were preparing the news schedules for October 28, when almost simultaneously, tipsters telephoned with information about a shooting at St. Pius X High School. Both men sent out a reporter and a photographer to do a check. (Newspapers invariably get several anonymous tips during an average day and although they are rarely hoaxes, tipsters often exaggerate the importance of their information.)

While the initial school checks were being made, radio reports indicated that far from being exaggerated, this particular piece of information had only scratched the surface of the incident. Within an hour, both city editors had dispatched more "troops" to the scene.

It was several hours before news of another incident was also connected with Robert Poulin. The death of a young girl in a fire at 5 Warrington Drive was in itself tragic, but just a coincidence as far as the St. Pius shootings were concerned. Then, from a variety of sources the facts were pieced together.

With this flood of information landing on their desks, Eastwood and Honeyman were faced with the task of putting it into some kind of order. Their plans of action were virtually the same. This was one big story that hadn't happened on deadline, so for a change, time was of no great worry.

Outside the actual facts of the event, certain sidebars (extra, related stories) were ordered from other reporters. The *Journal* assigned its Toronto staff to contact the provincial attorney general for comments on gun control; psychiatrists were contacted for early assessments of Poulin; and pictures of the victims had to be found. School yearbooks made the last chore fairly easy.

By the following morning, the newspapers were crammed with information on the story and on subsequent days, as more facts emerged, related stories were printed. Never before had there been a story of such magnitude in Ottawa, and never before had the reporters of the news

been so criticized for doing what they considered to be their job. Charges of sensationalism were rampant and reporters everywhere were being taken to task for irresponsibility.

Eastwood summed the whole thing up from the newspapers' viewpoint:

"Naturally, the full spate of coverage given the shooting and subsequent events led to cries of sensationalism by some members of the community. There is no question that there was 'sensationalism' because the very nature of the tragic events was sensational.

"Much of the unpopularity of the media is a manifestation of the old phenomenon of hating the messenger who brings bad news. One of the inescapable functions of newspapers is to mirror society. Inaccuracy can always be found in reflection but the picture in the mirror generally tends to be true. If newspapers began to worry about the kill-the-messenger syndrome, President Nixon would still be running the United States and Watergate would be a small-time burglary. No. Silencing the messenger will not stop bad news. A national conspiracy of silence is not the answer.

"The job of the press is to report the news. When a shooting of this magnitude happens in a school, it is legitimate news. To cover it fully and prominently is not overplaying a cheap story to fill the needs of a dull day but rather it is meeting a responsibility. This may sometimes put thoughts into sick minds, but surely even that is better than living in a controlled society that is not free."

The Poulin/Rabot inquest jury criticized the media for deplorable sensationalism but Dr. Cotnam took the opposite view when he said that publication of such events creates awareness, even though occasionally an individual may be adversely affected. Certainly, on the subject of awareness, hundreds of parents across Canada made deliberate moves to get closer to and more involved

with their children after publication of the bizarre events surrounding the Poulin case. The modern concept of giving children complete independence at an early age took quite a bashing in many homes.

With stories like the Poulin case, newspapers, radio, and television newsmen would be faced with a mammoth, almost impossible task if they were barred from being sensational. How do you tell people that a boy raped and murdered a girl, killed a classmate, and shot six others without being sensational? How do you tell people about Poulin's obsession with pornography without being sensational? How would people know about the danger and proliferation of guns without telling the truth? Perhaps society is just ashamed of its own shortcomings. The day that mass murders are relegated to page three in a newspaper will be a sad day for everyone because by then respect for human life and the shock most people now feel when it is taken away will presumably be virtually non-existent.

An opinion often expressed is that people are shocked by real violence because the variety they are usually subjected to is phoney—the type depicted on fictional television programs, for example. Put simply, people don't subconsciously realize that when a victim gets shot or stabbed there is blood. When a victim gets a bullet in the head, his brains may spatter all over, and when someone is injured, he may beg for help.

In television programs the repercussions of violent acts are not shown, and therefore it is quite understandable that a child, unless educated otherwise, might be tempted to fire a gun and not expect blood to flow. The guy on tonight's cops and robbers show will be shot but he won't bleed, scream or cry—he will just fall to the ground, groan a little and pass on.

The majority of newsmen on the other hand do have standards, and if by pointing out society's aberrations they are criticized by society, then so be it. When facts

are presented in a tasteful way as befits their importance, then the news media must remain blameless if the information happens to have an adverse effect on a disturbed mind.

One thing the general public is probably unaware of is that for every fact passed on by a news reporter, another one is held back in the interests of good taste. Probably more than any other type of story, events like those of October 27, 1975, have to be passed on in their entirety to the public. Robert Poulin was apparently a normal person, living in a normal world and influenced by everyday things. If there are dangers in society, everyone is entitled to know about them.

Newspapers, television, and radio really do not know what people think of them. In the case of newspapers, people write letters only if they have something to complain about and those who do take the trouble to complain are usually members of some élitist citizen organization or official body representing a tiny proportion of the population. Radio and television have a little more contact with their listeners and viewers, but even so, they still have little overall knowledge of the general consensus of opinion on any given issue.

Perhaps the only real indication of how Canadians view their news messengers came out of a Senate Committee study (the "Davey Report") on the mass media in 1971. In general terms, most people were satisfied with the media, although there was widespread suspicion that the truth is usually slanted in news reports. Television, probably because of its mass visual appeal, was considered the most exciting and influential, radio the most immediate, and newspapers the most private and personal. The following are taken from the findings of the Davey Committee:

"When people think of the word 'press' they think of newspapers (79 per cent). Television, radio, and magazines are recognized as information media but not automatically included in the concept of the press."

"Television is an exciting but relaxing medium able to provide facts clearly but less able to give detailed background information. It brings reality to life to an extent that is sometimes frightening. It is particularly felt to be the medium for the whole family."

"Newspapers are felt to be the most essential medium, but also the most demanding of time and effort. They are the most diligent in keeping the public informed. More than the other media, they are perceived to represent the public conscience. They are also feared more than the other media for invasion of privacy. They are essential for reporting local events. Although useful for all adults, they are most important for the better educated and the businessman."

"Radio is relaxing as a soothing musical background and can provide news most quickly. In a public emergency, people would turn to their radios first. Normally, it is considered the most suitable medium for housewives and teenagers."

"Magazines are regarded as the least essential of the mass media. Like newspapers, they demand time and concentration and they are a private, not a family medium."

"If Canadians had to choose between losing their television, radio or newspaper for a week, slightly more would be reluctant to give up their television than radio or newspaper. However, if the time period was extended to one year, concern for losing the newspaper increases. College-educated people are most concerned about losing a newspaper."

"More than half of Canadians believe that newspapers

represent the interest of the public at large. This attitude varies by region."

"Television is identified by more people than either newspapers or radio as being the most factual, influential, educational, open, and frank, the most personal, and the one in which the family gets most interested. At the same time, more people consider newspapers and radio to be the most essential media. Even though television seems to satisfy more needs, people continue to have a strong identification with the older media."

"In the prairie provinces, radio is perceived to be the most essential medium. This is probably related to the fact that in Saskatchewan and other areas of the West, fewer householders have access to a daily newspaper. In Ontario and English-speaking Quebec, newspapers are most essential. In the Maritimes, newspapers and radio rank equally."

"Farmers are more involved with radio than are people in urban centres."

"Most Canadians feel they are better informed today than they were five years ago. They believe competition among the media has made for better reporting."

"Expressions of dissatisfaction with radio are less intense than with television. This is probably related to the degree of involvement with the medium."

"Newspapers offer freedom of choice. This is a key advantage. The reader can choose what he likes to read and reject what he does not like. Newspapers serve to clear people's thinking on issues or ideas."

"About half of the people fear the possibility of newspapers invading their privacy. Television and radio are not feared for this reason."

"Canadians believe that the media have the ability to

influence their thinking and their way of life. Television is identified as the most influential. About one in two Canadians suspect that television and magazines may contribute to a breakdown in moral standards and disrespect for religion. Fewer say this about newspapers and none say it of radio." [Authors' italics]

"Canadians believe the media have been a strong influence in promoting a desire for education. Television and radio are singled out as more influential in the growth of divorce, student protests, the use of drugs and Canadian nationalism. Newspapers, more than television and radio, are believed to contribute to a poor image for the labour movement."

"Newspapers are regarded as the conscience of society by 65 per cent of the people, television by 53 per cent, radio by 49 per cent, magazines by 44 per cent. Television is the medium most often regarded as contributing to a strong family relationship. Newspapers and television are especially credited with reminding people of their responsibilities to the less fortunate. However, all media are considered to do a good job."

"Newspapers are regarded as a medium for all people in all age groups and of different education levels. They are described as containing something for everyone. Radio is also for everyone but is generally perceived as a lower intelligence medium."

"Two out of three Canadians believe that a television camera can distort the truth. However, most people (seven in ten) are not concerned about this. They have faith in the integrity of the television operators."

"Eight in ten Canadians say that television is the best place for children under ten to acquire information."

"More than four in ten Canadians admit that they talk to their radios and television sets. This is partly from

loneliness and partly from a latent frustration at not being about to react to what is said, or done on the screen."

"People believe that television has the greatest influence on their attitudes towards travel, sex, love, marriage, family, political enthusiasm, clothes styles, student movements, personal habits, and profanity. Newspapers are regarded as most influential in attitudes toward law, the courts, security, the economic system, school systems, religion, birth control, divorce, Canadian nationalism. In attitudes towards money matters and strikes, the influence of television and newspapers tends to be equal." [Authors' italics]

"There is a belief that the media attempt to improve understanding of French-Canadian aspirations. However, a majority of people in the four western provinces say that the media generate resentment rather than better understanding. Most French Canadians believe that understanding is improved. In Ontario and English-speaking Quebec, opinion is nearly equally divided."

"Newspapers are chosen by 74 per cent as the medium that best performs the role of ombudsman or public protector. Television is identified by 25 per cent and radio by 22 per cent."

The media obviously influences people in a variety of ways. The greatest criticism, however, is that of the violence inherent in so many news broadcasts.

According to that same report, the majority of people accept violence if it is within the law—hockey games, pie-throwing contests, or war stories. But they reject violence if it is related to youth or family life—nudity, parental fights, or student riots. Those things can contribute to a moral breakdown.

It appears that society will generally acquiesce in

anything that is considered acceptable, but when news reporting encroaches upon sacred cows, the attitudes change. Exposing blemishes in day-to-day activities in which the majority participate can lead to a vicious backlash.

The Robert Poulin story exposed many of those blemishes. It exposed the inadequacy of knowledge about the effects of pornography, neglected aspects of the school system, the dangerous proliferation of firearms, and the possible dangers in militia training. For too long, people have been comfortable accepting all, or some of these common aspects of life.

The media reported the exposures and in doing so widened the awareness. What society does with the information should be the responsibility of everyone.

Chapter Eight

SCHOOLS: A New Fear

The schools are given a product. A product of society but also a product of a family upbringing. . . . And that's where a problem develops. Schools are finding parents more and more who are saying, "You've got him for the day, you take care of him and don't bother me."

——Robert Darby, Superintendent of Student Services, Ottawa Board of Education

On the Friday before the Poulin/Rabot inquest, two students at Glebe Collegiate Institute in Ottawa's old and dignified Glebe area, went to see their vice-principal. They figured they had waited long enough and they were getting scared. They had to tell someone before something happened: a student had a gun in his locker. The boy had a background of mental instability and the two students who knew him were worried. His locker was checked and a loaded .38-calibre revolver was found. Glebe Collegiate was the school Kim Rabot was attending the day she died.

In the first week of June, a youth at an Ottawa school claimed he was being harassed by fellow students. He threatened to come to school the next day with a shotgun and kill the students who were harassing him—he said he would "blow their brains out". He threatened to murder the vice-principal too

Another incident occurred about the same time. A high-school student in Ottawa beat another student severely, sending the victim to hospital, and then he threatened to attack the vice-principal. The youth had had a history of beating up other students.

Recently, the head of guidance at one of Ottawa's public schools had been sitting in his office. A former student walked into the office armed with an iron bar, and threatened to kill him. Although he didn't use the bar, he put the guidance counsellor in hospital after a brutal beating. The former student and the guidance counsellor had once been friends. There was no apparent provocation for the attack.

The incidents are many. There was the student who went after a teacher with a razor, threatening to carve her up. He was sent to the Royal Ottawa Hospital, where staff psychiatrists are treating an increasing number of students. And there was the student who attacked another with a can opener, the boy who tried to strangle a student with a scarf, and the youth who broke another student's nose, just because someone had dared him to do it. Violence in the schools has become a serious problem; serious enough for the Ottawa Board of Education to allocate funds to halt its spread (at a time when teachers are facing layoffs in tight-budget years).

Robert Darby, Superintendent of Student Services for the Ottawa board, is the man charged with trying to manage a situation that could easily get out of control. Speaking for himself only, he says:

"The thing that is concerning the administrators in the schools is that in all schools—it's like society—you have a criminal element. Our school system has 48,000 people; well, you're bound to have a criminal element and they're identifiable, you know who they are. But we're having acts now by youngsters who have had no previous . . . you wouldn't suspect, you wouldn't think they would do anything. And that is one of the things that is really

bothering us. We don't know why, we don't know where it's coming from, why people are doing these things. We are requiring more and more psychiatric evaluation now than we ever had before. We've set up a 24-hour emergency service in conjunction with the General Hospital to have psychiatric assistance open to us."

In a nutshell, the case of Robert Poulin was not an isolated one in Ottawa, or in schools generally. The pressures of modern society affect students in much the same way they affect others. Some, who can't handle them, react in violent ways. It's happening more frequently and teachers are finding that schools aren't as safe as they used to be. But Robert Poulin has put his mark on schools in Ottawa and across Canada. That mark is one of fear. When a student makes a threat now, it carries more weight than it did before October 27, 1975. All a teacher has to do is think about what Robert Poulin did and from that moment, the student is the one holding all the cards.

Darby, once a high-school principal himself, remembers receiving many threats back then and never thinking twice about them. Now, if someone threatens him he admits he takes him seriously. And that's the usual reaction throughout most Ottawa schools. There is no doubt that a tragedy like the one at St. Pius could be repeated in just about any school in Canada because things are getting worse. Like the gun-control problem, violence in schools is something people from the United States warn Canadians about.

An American educator was in Ottawa recently while a conference was being prepared and he warned a group of local school administrators to keep a tight grip on the situation. "Don't loosen up a bit, we did and look at the situation we're in, we've loosened up and now we've got the bluecoats in the corridors of our schools."

Ottawa isn't loosening up. In fact, it is taking what could be described as the firmest action in the country in

trying to control violence in the schools. Locker searches are a touchy area. At present, the Ottawa board can still search a locker, the policy being the student must be present at the time. In May, 1976, a principals' committee suggested the policy be reviewed and the matter went to a board meeting; that was when the protests began. People took sides and there were cries of invasion of privacy and civil liberties.

As Dr. Warme said at the inquest, however, there are thousands of schizoid students in Ontario schools and some could very well be dangerous. Perhaps the public can't be expected to fully appreciate the problem because it has never really been exposed to it. The violent incidents within the schools are usually kept there where no one ever hears about them.

Darby, thinking out loud, wonders if perhaps the time has come to lay it on the line for people, and to say outright that what they don't know *can* hurt them. When he appears before committees to talk about policy in this area, he secretly hopes someone will get up and ask him to name a few incidents of violence in the schools. He could then hold the floor for the rest of the evening.

Darby had dropped a bombshell at the inquest. He had walked up to the witness stand and told everyone that he had no doubt a tragedy similar to St. Pius could happen again, any time in Ottawa. The phone calls started coming in after that. No one had ever heard anyone say something like that. The calls came from as far away as Vancouver. "My reaction was sure it can happen again, especially when we had a student with a loaded revolver in a locker the Friday before the inquest; this boy I know was quite capable of this type of violence."

So the concern is mounting. Ottawa schools are keeping closer tabs on violence than ever before. The anticipation was more evident after October 27, but there

was a noticeable sigh of relief when no one immediately tried to copy Robert Poulin.

The schools appreciate the roots of the problem. Society is becoming complex and highly pressurized and teachers and administrators realize they can't isolate themselves from it. The instability and the cynicism of society are two of the main causes of what's happening in the schools. Tension in the home, brought on by parents who have lost a job or missed a promotion, affects the children, who in turn bring that emotional strain of the home atmosphere with them to school. There is also the pressure in school to be good at certain things: the good-looking sports star often appears to have a pretty good life on campus. However, someone not able to make the tenth grade finds the school system seems to be set up to emphasize *his* shortcomings.

There are so many incidents related to violence in Ottawa public schools that the Ottawa Board of Education asked Darby to come up with a standard form for reporting them. Currently, he receives notice of the incidents on pieces of paper and over the telephone.

So a study was made of what had been going on in the schools, to see what type of form would be needed and what offences had to be covered. What has emerged is a list long enough to convince anyone that immediate and serious action is needed. The options on this list have been put there because these types of incidents have happened and they will probably happen again. Teachers are seeing more and more such incidents every day.

Here are those official definitions of school violence based on past experiences, as drawn up by the department of psychology of the Ottawa Board of Education:

A. Violence Directed Against Others:

1 *Acts of Violence*

Inside school or verified outside school.

FOR EXAMPLE: An apparently unprovoked

physical attack, with or without a weapon on a person or persons; a physical response to provocation when the response is deemed excessive; any physical aggression which results in injury sufficiently severe to require referral to a medical doctor; an emerging pattern of physical aggression toward others; any wilful destruction of property except that which is considered minor; any act of aggression against the school in general, such as fire setting, bomb planting, window breaking. Strong, but not conclusively-substantiated evidence of an act of violence should be reported but noted as "questionable".

II *Threat of Violence*

By letter, phone or direct verbal communication. Note: It is difficult and often impossible to know when a threat of violence is significant. For purposes of research, any confirmed threat should be recorded, except when it is judged to have been made in jest, or is not deemed portentous, or is subsequently nullified (after questioning of student).

FOR EXAMPLE: a) Physical threat—limited to threats of bodily harm or implied bodily harm to a person or persons.

b) Non-physical threat—threat of character assassination or harassment; obscene phone calls or letters.

III *Potential for Violence*

Other than threats.

FOR EXAMPLE: Carrying or concealing a knife (other than a jack-knife), chain, gun or other concealed weapon—in which case an effort should be made to determine whether the

motive is protection; diagnostic impression of potential violence.

B. Violence Directed Against Self:

I *Act of Violence*

Inside school or verified outside school.

FOR EXAMPLE: Suicide, attempted suicide, any act of self-injury or self-mutilation whether considered to be a plea for help or self-punishment or a gesture of significance.

II *Threat of Violence*

By letter, phone, or direct verbal communication.

FOR EXAMPLE: A statement made by a student expressing desire or intent to harm self, when such a statement is regarded to be serious. In such a case it should not be considered an invasion of privacy to refer to an appropriate therapeutic agent.

III *Potential for Violence*

Other than threat of violence.

FOR EXAMPLE: Extended non-therapeutic use of drugs; possession of a lethal dose of drugs, etc.; diagnostic impression of potential violence to self.

Dr. Cotnam leaves no doubt in anyone's mind what he thinks of locker searches. If all the school lockers were searched in one day the result would be an arsenal of guns and ammunition, along with drugs, he says. The coroner feels that this is one area where the cry of civil libertarians just doesn't make sense. The pendulum is beginning to swing the other way.

Dr. Cotnam and Ormston agreed that there was a chance the St. Pius part of the events of October 27 might have been prevented if there had been a better attendance-checking system. The police had also become concerned about the way attendance was being handled in the schools, and they had a right to be. On September 26, 1975, ten-year-old Patricia Seesink had been abducted

at noon-hour from Barrhaven Public School in nearby Nepean township. Twenty hours later her body was found in an abandoned barn in the township. She had been sexually assaulted and then murdered. A thirty-one-year-old transient was convicted of the murder.

Schools are changing. With the credit system, the old home form or home-room system is all but extinct at many schools. There are provisions that when students have a spare period, they don't have to stay in the building; sometimes they are even allowed to leave the school. And the system of keeping attendance differs from school to school. Teachers often find themselves confronting parents who tell them it's none of their business where their son or daughter is.

Mrs. Rabot had not received a call from Glebe Collegiate informing her that Kim hadn't shown up for classes that day. John King, principal of Glebe, isn't happy with the present system of attendance checking. According to King, the home room has lost its function in keeping attendance. Nothing was really done about attendance at Glebe Collegiate until the quarterly report. That was when parents were informed how many classes their children had missed. Kim had missed a total of sixteen classes from September until the October tragedy. John King doesn't like the system but he is stuck with it. The word attendance popped up enough in the inquest to make people realize this was another area of the schools that deserved study and change. A pilot project was set up by the Ottawa board to hire attendance clerks to check attendance in four high schools. The results of the project are to be presented to the board.

The Ontario government has set up a task force on attendance. Its chairman, O. R. Watson, sees the credit system as being the main stumbling block to setting up a good attendance-checking system. That system may have to be changed. The St. Pius shooting wasn't the only

reason the commission was set up but it played an instrumental part in getting the government to act.

Watson says the responsibility for attendance is put on the shoulders of the individual school principal but no one is telling him how to do the job. Watson hopes to come up with something soon that will set down a uniform attendance system for all the schools in the province. At first glance, attendance seems like a dry subject, but it can be directly related to the horror and death in Brampton on May 28, and in Ottawa on October 27, 1975.

The days of the old student/teacher relationship are gone. At one time, a teacher would be so familiar with the patterns of his students that if one of them didn't turn up for classes, he or she would usually know why. Today, a teacher doesn't know whether to worry or not if a student skips school. The old-fashioned class hood, complete with leather jacket is no longer the big concern. Now, the biggest dangers are the quiet types like Robert Poulin.

The impact of the events of October 27 on schools across Ottawa has been great. It has brought about that extra element of fear to every threat. Some of the parents of students in classroom 71 are teachers themselves and they too were visibly shaken. Robert Darby points out that there are enough disturbed people in the community to commit this type of violence, and now what goes for the outside world applies to the schools also. The school's superintendent recalls his old teaching days and five of his home-form students who have been jailed for murder.

"We knew that some of those students were quite capable of doing that and we weren't surprised. But I never in my twenty years in the business, heard of someone coming off the street and beating up the head of a department in his office. I've never heard of a bomb going off in a locker—this is modern phenomena, really.

Ten years ago, this type of thing didn't go on.

"It does now—and by people the teachers least expect. But the schools are given a product. A product of society but also a product of a family upbringing. It all goes back to the family. If a boy or girl has a good family life, the chances of his name being on a violence report are pretty slim. And that's where a problem develops. Schools are finding parents more and more who are saying 'You've got him for the day, you take care of him and don't bother me.'

"I disagree with the psychiatrists' statement that nobody would have known, including Robert's parents. I'm speaking now as a parent. . . . I'm talking about the observance of your children and their reactions. I think that most parents would know, would suspect. I don't know very many parents who would allow a youngster to have a room of his own and never go into it. I just don't see how that can happen, as a parent. And everyone I've talked to comes up with the subject of the Poulin case, they talk about it and I've mentioned this fact, that the psychiatrists said no one could have known about it, not even the parents, and a lot of them disagreed with that."

A bomb went off in Ottawa's Laurentian High School six months after the Poulin affair. The board immediately suspended the two persons believed responsible. Soon after, a legal letter arrived on behalf of one of the parents saying his son couldn't be suspended, since he had not been proven guilty of any wrongdoing. The board obtained legal advice and the two boys are back in school, although criminal charges were laid in connection with that incident. The schools are hoping parents will become aware of the problem and then be able to offer a little help and understanding.

The St. Pius incident has already sent one school back to the home-room system and several others have moved in that direction. The concept of a home room gives the

teacher a chance to get to know the students, to help them, and to understand them. It also helps to answer the attendance-checking problem. With fifty to sixty bomb threats every year at Ottawa public schools, it would be handy to know where the absentees are. A person like Robert Poulin, with deep-seated, heavily disguised problems shaped mainly by influences outside school, might be more readily detected.

Right now, the only way school authorities can see of halting the growing problem of violence is to put more money into psychiatric evaluation. But even this would not solve all the problems. In one case, attempts were made to have a student admitted for psychiatric care, but school officials were told "he hasn't done anything yet". So, the student had to be charged with truancy to be admitted. He was out within twenty-four hours and the next day, beat up his sister and pulled a knife on another person.

The teachers can only do so much. They're often operating on the basis of a calculated risk: schools can't be evacuated, for example, for every bomb scare or they'd be empty most of the time. It's just that the odds are becoming poorer. The risk isn't always a calculated one anymore.

Robert Poulin shocked everyone by his actions on October 27, because aside from the obvious reasons, Robert was quiet, came from an upper-middle-class neighbourhood, and had never been in trouble before. Even the school he attended was not noted for excessive violence. Academically, St. Pius is one of the better schools in the city. It has good teachers and excellent sports teams. But, as Superintendent Darby says, the standard of normality doesn't apply anymore. Tragedy is beginning to occur in places where it is least expected.

That is a thought on every teacher's mind as he or she goes to work these days. Meanwhile, administrators are watching the pendulum of liberal thinking and permissive-

ness swing back the other way. They hope to use this to get the parental backing they will need if the school system is to be tightened up.

Perhaps Mary Poulin herself had the final word on how the schools, outsiders, and public organizations could only do so much. She said that not even the best attendance-checking system would have done any good on October 27. If the school had phoned the Poulin family saying that Kim was last seen with Robert and that they were looking for her, Mrs. Poulin would then have gone and asked Robert. And she said that, in the frame of mind her son had been in that day, he probably would have said he had talked to Kim but then parted company.

The schools are only part of it. They can only do so much even if their systems are perfect. The new fear is on a teacher's mind more and more these days. There are the quiet ones like Robert, and there are others who give danger warnings in less dramatic ways—they are potential time bombs going off a bit at a time. When Robert Darby came to work one day, he found a note on his desk. It was from a school principal concerning a student: ". . . extremely violent, has to be physically restrained, frequently shuts out the world, not responding to the class, reacts violently to even slight comments of other children, refuses to work, uses foul language. Recommend that he be seen at Royal Ottawa Hospital."

Darby has been getting more and more of these kinds of notes lately.

SECTION THREE

AN AFFAIR OF THE MIND

Chapter Nine

AN ASSESSMENT: If Only They'd Known

If people don't put their foot down and start demanding some sort of quality . . . in the products that are available to young minds, we're going to get more Robert Poulins.

——Ted Ormston, former Ottawa Assistant Crown Attorney

Bruce Hamill had had a fight with Robert Poulin one day early in July, 1975. At the time, it had seemed to be an insignificant scuffle between two teenagers on arduous summer training with the militia. But an unheard-of, veritable tidal wave of emotion had hit the still waters of Robert's mind—he had for the first time in memory lost control. Hamill might have been lucky because something similar would happen again the following fall. The date then would be October 27.

Hamill described the fight: "We were going for a ten-mile hike but a lot of us were tired and crabby and didn't feel like marching ten miles. I was putting up the tent flaps and I got some dirt in Robert's mess tin and he got very upset and started yelling at me. He said he wouldn't do that to my mess tin and got more upset. I was peeved off so I grabbed his mess tin and threw it across the tent. Then he kicked me in the ribs—he gave me a boot in the ribs and we had a fight. I gave him a bleeding nose. He

had a real hateful look on his face." Hamill nearly went to jail for the incident but other than that, the whole thing blew over—until a long time afterwards, that is.

The investigators' search had brought them into contact with dozens of people who had met, spent time, or lived with Robert Poulin, but it had become increasingly obvious that not one of them really knew him. Many thought they did but when faced with the mysterious and stunning events of October 27 they had to shrug their shoulders and admit their total surprise. That's why the fight with Bruce Hamill had taken on the huge proportions that it did. When it came to news about an overtly angry Robert Poulin, Hamill had the exclusive story.

However, Hamill, and the police who interviewed him, still had to admit that the short scrap couldn't have been interpreted as an indicator of Robert Poulin's master plan. It was dismissed, both at the time and four months later, simply as a fight between boys. There was no evidence to suggest that it was anything else.

To this day Hamill maintains that neither he nor anyone else knew this strange, quiet boy. At one point some of the boys at the militia summer camp were looking at some girlie magazines. "He wouldn't even look at them," recalls Hamill. "He was a pretty straight guy . . . didn't smoke dope, didn't drink. He said he knew this girl but never mentioned her name or anything. Just said that he knew her. And he never talked about his parents. It was hard to talk to him or get him to say anything."

Robert usually sat alone in the camp lunch room staring into space, and the only time he talked to anyone was when they talked to him. Sometimes, when some of the other young soldiers were joking around, he would smile, but he'd never laugh. Robert went out on a social evening with the others only once, and that was to see the movie *Serpico*. Hamill remembers that now because the movie had a rape scene in it. . . .

In their seemingly hopeless search for a single person

who may have been able to give some insight into Poulin's character, police questioned Terry Chisamore, and in some respects they were lucky. By average standards, there was no relationship between the two, but by this time anyone who had had more than a few words with Poulin was much sought after. Apparently, Robert had even vaguely confided in Chisamore:

"I remember when he first came for recruitment. He came in with his dad to sign up. Now Rob wasn't for the idea, from what he's told me and from everything I've gathered from the conversations he was kind of against it. But his father was for it, so eventually, after an argument, Rob signed. From what I gathered, they had talked it over earlier right and so they must have basically covered what they'd said earlier . . . it went something to the effect, 'You know what we talked about earlier Rob, well go ahead with it.' Their voices were raised but it wasn't a fight, just an argument. It was a heated argument and you could say he was kind of forced into it but later he developed a real interest. Anyway, I took him up to the mess that night and he was timid and he really didn't want to do anything, he just wanted to sit by himself. As soon as the night was over, he got out of there as fast as possible."

Soon afterwards, Robert joined the militia at the recruiting centre in downtown Ottawa; training started for the summer program at Camp Petawawa in the eastern Ontario countryside. Chisamore recalls several conversations covering a wide range of subjects but always excluding girls and members of the Poulin family.

"As far as I could gather, he was as normal as you or me. I'd call him a friend of mine. Sometimes, he was a real good friend. We talked about school and he said he liked it although he did mention something about the guys giving him a hassle. He just referred to them as guys, no names. The teacher was okay though, he told me. A couple of times he'd say he had the answer but

sometimes he was sort of afraid to put his hand up because he always had the answer and it put him out of the class.

"He said he wanted to be an officer and go for officer training. He liked the strategy behind the [war]games. I touched on families a few times and at that point he always changed the subject. He evaded questions about his family and I thought that was pretty strange."

Chisamore remembers that a couple of weeks before the murders and suicide, Robert missed some of the twice-weekly militia meetings:

"The last time I saw Robert was about a week before he died. I asked why he wasn't down for training the previous Monday and he said his work had been piling up on him and he had to get cracking to bring himself up. That was the last time I saw him and he never gave me an idea he was thinking about something like what happened. To me there was nothing changed, he was still the same. If only I'd had some idea that something was going through his head like this, then maybe there could have been something done."

Both Hamill and Chisamore knew Robert Poulin only briefly, but St. Pius classmate Victor Tolgysey first became his friend in December, 1972, while in Grade 10. Tolgysey became Robert's opposition in wargames and the two would often spend their long summer holidays or free nights playing the games of military strategy at each other's homes.

Robert was never keen on letting Victor see the basement bedroom, so usually when the games were played over at Warrington Drive, they would take place outside the curtain that divided the boy's quarters from the rest of the concrete-walled room. Victor would say later that when he first saw his friend's bedroom, he was shocked at the sight of it, but that over a period of time he had gotten used to the unusual surroundings.

As school work and part-time jobs began to eat away

at Robert's time, he and Victor would play their games over the telephone. This was the main reason Robert had had his own private basement phone installed. A few weeks before the October tragedy, the two boys started a re-enactment of the Second World War in the form of a game called Global War. Victor took the Allies' side and Robert the Germans', but the game was never finished. For a boy who loved wargaming so much, there's a certain irony that at the time of his death, he quit it while he was ahead . . . Robert was winning the game when he died. Despite their long relationship, Victor, like all the other witnesses, left the December inquest with the impression that even he hadn't known Robert Poulin.

So that was it. Police had searched every corner of Robert Poulin's past without finding any clues as to why he had been so intent on causing so much suffering to himself, the people he took with him, and the people he left behind. Now, virtually without solid facts, the investigators turned to the experts for theories.

Drs. Atcheson and Warme, two leading Toronto psychiatrists, were called in and their assignment had been straightforward: "Look at the evidence and give us some logical, straightforward answers why such a useless waste of human life had to happen." It wasn't an easy assignment.

Before making their final report four weeks after the deaths, the two spent many hours interviewing the Poulin family and also spoke to Hamill, Chisamore, Tolgysey, Father Bedard, and St. Pius principal Len Lunney. Following those interviews, they came to the conclusion that Robert was a perverted sadist who had been suffering from a schizoid personality disorder. His success in concealing the psychotic intensity of his ideas made his condition virtually impossible for an outsider to detect: it made it even more difficult to predict that the events of October 27 would occur.

The psychiatrists no doubt appreciated the desire of the public in wanting a logical explanation for seemingly illogical acts. After all, most crimes are committed with a motive in mind, and in Robert Poulin's case, there did not seem to be one. Perhaps unconsciously the millions of people with "normal" children who had been shaken by the tragedy wanted their minds put at ease. The doctors tried:

"To most people it seems only reasonable that the perpetrator of such gross acts of violence ought to be recognizable prior to the act. Yet in our experience, and in literature, we find such observations as '. . . the sudden murderers did not have a history of trouble with the law, nor did they lack a sense of responsibility . . . [They are frequently] from cohesive family backgrounds, where conformity to the social system was emphasized. . . .'

"Robert Poulin too, was a responsible boy from a cohesive family background. This is in marked contrast to children or adolescents who have demonstrated a lengthy and predictable pattern of anti-social behaviour and where the potential for future violence is easily detectable by teachers, parents and peers.

"However, in retrospect, we have been able to obtain information which clearly indicates the presence of psychopathology. Historial information from the parents, scrutiny of family documents and a review of well-documented life records, indicate that birth and early development [of Robert Poulin] were normal and showed no evidence of constitutional factors that would account for his future pathology. Robert had a pigeon-chest from birth and at age seven developed an inguinal hernia which was surgically repaired at that time. In themselves, these conditions are of little significance, but may well have contributed to the flawed image he had of himself. At age twelve, Robert developed Myopia, a condition which eventually interfered with his ambition to become a pilot and which may also have contributed to a state of low

self-esteem. Throughout his life he appeared considerably younger than his chronological age and is described as being overweight. The character of the boy would also indicate that pubertal changes came later than the norm. This constellation of factors is important in view of his eventual failure to establish an age-appropriate sexual role and to develop peer-group relations."

Atcheson and Warme both admitted that because of the many complex components that build up to create violent behaviour, a true and complete picture of Robert Poulin's character could only have been possible if he had survived and had been examined. And, according to Warme, even had Robert lived after October 27, his mind would have been too delicate to analyze. It was obvious that murderous and sexually perverse fantasies had been a part of his personality for some time. Possibly, the things that ultimately led to the tragedy had been brewing in the boy's mind before he was twelve years old and before he went to live down in the basement. Those early influences were never really discussed by the psychiatrists.

Warme commented at the inquest that if tests were carried out on every person, fantasies of violence would probably be discovered in most. In the province of Ontario alone, there are probably thousands of schizoid people, he said. As for youngsters, it is the aloof and cold students who should be watched.

The hours spent in interviewing the family and digging into family records apparently gave the psychiatrists little information about the influence of home life on Robert's mind. This aspect was of concern to most people, but apparently Warme and Atcheson felt the home environment had had relatively little to do with the final act.

As frustrating as it was to the other investigators, the psychiatrists were right when they said that the analysis of a dead person's mind necessarily left many questions unanswered, and for many, lingering worries. If there was anything radically unusual in Poulin's background, it has

never been revealed or identified by experts. We know the kind of person Robert was at the time of his death, but according to the evidence, social phenomena were primarily to blame. But parents and children in many western countries are subject to the same pressures that allegedly led to the slayings on October 27, so where does that leave the rest of us?

Assistant Crown Attorney Ted Ormston and Detective Sergeant Bob Kelly had been on the receiving end of every minute detail of the Poulin case. And they too had their opinions of the boy. This was Ormston's theory:

"Robert Poulin was symbolic of a lot of things in our society. They may not be proper but people tend to sit back and be tolerant about them. He was doing well academically and by the exterior standards, he was a fine child. But we know now, he was obsessed with pornography and living in a sexual fantasy world that was made available through pornographic books that are available to any age group. I personally believe that obscenity becomes more and more pathological. There isn't a human orifice that hasn't been violated in any one of the current mass-subscribed magazines. How much closer can you get? What can give you a greater thrill than that. Eventually, it's tying someone down and then slapping them around a little and then you get a little more blood until you get to the stage of snuff films—where the ultimate sexual kick for people who are jaded from everything they've seen in the past fifteen years is to see someone die at the end of it.

"Would you tolerate someone dumping garbage on your front lawn? No. And yet, we tolerate garbage on our newsstands. We don't want to be classified as not being liberal because it's apparently *in* to be liberal, right?

"If people don't put their foot down and start demanding some sort of quality not only in the food product but in the products that are available to young minds, we're going to get more Robert Poulins. There is more violence

now than ever and that indicates that violence is a way of life and is becoming acceptable. The violence once thought exclusive to New York is now creeping up into Canada. It's because people are becoming so tolerant, they are allowing the minority they don't agree with to take over.

"Maybe we should start judging our children by different standards. Not by how well they do in their math exams but how well they co-exist and relate to other people. Maybe it's because we just don't establish relationships any more. Perhaps it's a part of urbanization.

"Everybody thought Robert Poulin was a loner by preference but in fact, he was living in a world of fantasy. How many other high-school students are doing the same?

"If you're mentally ill, from there it isn't a far step from lying in your basement masturbating while looking at girls captured in war-like situations and actually going out and scooping a girl off the streets, bringing her back to the basement and doing the same thing. Poulin just couldn't tell the difference from last night's fantasy and today's reality."

As always at inquests, the last words belong to the coroner and to his jury. The coroner gives his assessment of the hearing and tries to guide the jury into making recommendations that might ultimately prevent similar things happening again. The coroner's motto says it all: "We speak for the dead to protect the living."

Ontario's Chief Coroner had come to Ottawa a concerned and determined man, because he realized that if his job would ever achieve anything substantial, this, out of the 150 deaths a day he dealt with, was the chance to do it.

"We now know that Robert Poulin was psychotic at the time of this episode," said Dr. Cotnam. "In retrospect we know he was a schizoid personality but an excellent

student, a good paper boy—he had a good side and bad side. The latter he was able to hide from his fellow students, his friends and teachers and even his own family. The psychiatrists said that this terrible violence was not predictable. They also state that his psychiatric problem started in his childhood years but got worse recently. Some mental problems may be due to heredity or to environment but it is difficult to separate the two. We know that in the past Robert was developing some bizarre traits and was planning to carry out a rape/murder/suicide and fire sequence, as evidenced by the details included in his diary entry of April 7, 1975. Also the diary includes extreme hostility towards his family. As he stated, he intended to make them suffer; not by killing them which would be too easy for them but by burning the house down on a payday when the most money would be in the house. He admitted in his diary to periods of depression, was upset about failing his examination in biology and may have suffered another traumatic setback when he was turned down by a board as officer candidate for the army.

"Contrary to some other opinions expressed by witnesses at this inquest, I do not believe that Robert was brought up in a completely normal atmosphere at home. (Cotnam was in effect, disagreeing with the psychiatrists.) At age twelve, he lived in an unfinished basement room which his one close friend, Victor Tolgysey, described as a storage room. It shocked Victor when he first saw it but he said he finally got used to it. There was little natural light in this room, only a small window for ventilation and only separated from the rest of the basement workshop and furnace room by some sheets or drapes hanging from the ceiling and partially attached to some pipe, and with a private entrance from the garage.

"It seemed unusual and strange for a boy from twelve to eighteen years of age wanting to live and being permitted to live by his family under these conditions when

bedroom space was available upstairs by doubling up the girls. And of course, recently there must have been an empty bedroom because one girl got married and was gone. The family excuse was that he wanted privacy and that they wished to respect it at all times to make him independent. But I find this unusual, when in fact—in my opinion—he required a lot more supervision, particularly in his younger years, in this basement atmosphere. And probably, although their intentions were good—I don't think they had any ulterior motives—they were misguided. And perhaps it would be a good idea for other parents to take a good look at where their kids are living and for what reason and what they're doing and what they're accumulating and for what reasons. [In other words] more supervision by parents rather than allowing extreme privacy. To me, Robert was living like a hermit. He stayed in his own house, coming and going as he wished—going upstairs when it suited him for eating or other necessities. According to his mother, he also cleaned his own room and changed the bed clothing and usually forbade anyone to invade his private room. I find this a bit unusual . . . most mothers would insist on going in and cleaning the room properly, having a look around and seeing what their son is doing. In addition, Robert was a loner. He had only one close friend—Victor—and little to do with other activities such as school parties and dances or parties with kids at his home or others; little to do with girls—only Kim Rabot on one occasion."

Cotnam then went into various other aspects of the inquest, including gun control, pornography, school attendance and violence in the media.

The jury's response was in some ways disappointing to many people. It compromised on the gun-control issue and although it recommended a total ban on pornography in the province of Ontario, it defined the subject as "anything showing or representing the genital parts of the human body". As many people realized, that defini-

tion (if the recommendation were ever accepted in law) would mean a total ban on many public statues and on the majority of medical books.

On the gun issue the jury recommended:

(a) A firearm ownership permit system be implemented as soon as possible with the following provisions:
  (1) Valid reasons to receive a permit limited to hunting for survival, police, security, D.N.D. (Department of National Defence), sport hunting, and long-gun target shooting.
  (2) Police or registrar of firearms to have the power of veto with court appeal.
  (3) The licence to include a photo, signature and social insurance number.

(b) Abolition of currently restricted weapons, except for police, security and D.N.D.

(c) All other firearms, when not in use, are to be held in a depository run by approved security agencies. The cost to be borne by firearm owners.

(d) A government-paid-for program to buy and destroy or to make inoperable all firearms turned in by the public.

(e) Firearms will be sold only to those holding an ownership licence, after a thirty-day cooling-off period.

(f) Ownership licence must be presented to buy ammunition.

(g) Retailers are to keep records of all sales by model and serial number.

(h) Penalties for violations to be mandatory and a minimum of two years for illegal possession and five years additional for use in commission of a crime.

On the school system:

(a) Attendance systems be implemented which will establish the presence or absence of a student within thirty minutes of the start of the student's day.

(b) Unreported absences to be checked with parents within sixty minutes of the start of the student's day.

(c) Locker searches must be conducted at least once per semester on a random basis.

(d) All acts of violence or threats of violence in schools are to be reported to the department of education for statistical compilation.

While accepting that the media is necessary, the jury said that the reporting of suggestive, explicit details is "dangerous" and sensational reporting was to be deplored. They also asked that more money be spent on psychological research and on educating the public about health problems—Atcheson and Warme had pointed out a financial shortcoming in both those areas.

The jury summarized the whole affair with two lines from its verdict: *"Restrictions on the rights of individuals may well be the price we have to pay for civilization."* With that, the inquest into the deaths of Robert Poulin and Kim Rabot, file #10681, was over.

Chapter Ten

THE PARENTS: A Conversation

We never had any reason to be suspicious of him, nor had he done anything in eighteen years to make us suspicious.

——Stuart Poulin talking about his son Robert

The following interview with Stuart and Mary Poulin was conducted in May, 1976.

Do you want to talk about the militia? You said it was given an extra rough ride at the inquest.

(Stuart Poulin) "It indicated to me that there was no love lost because they train kids that were eighteen years old. The chances of someone like Robert shooting somebody else because of the militia were very very small. The idea didn't come from the militia."

What about the knife strapped across his chest at the shooting?

"We knew nothing about it until the police gave us a report on it. This could have been seen from television, read in a book, could have come from cops and robbers or cowboys and Indians that kids play when they are young. I don't think there was anything unusual in the fact that kids could think this way."

So you think anybody could do it physically?

"Yes, definitely."

You said that Robert could have had two feelings about the militia.
"It is my opinion that he was not totally committed to a military career. Whether this was because of his eyes precluding him from being a pilot, I don't know but when I was bringing him out to the interview for officer's training, for which he eventually got turned down, I told him at the time, I said, 'You don't have to be an officer. Most people come through the ranks. Quite often in the Service, they prefer people to come through the ranks so you can train to take orders before you start giving them.' I don't know whether he really accepted that statement."

Was that because he was just a boy?
"I think so. The idea of being an officer who gives the orders and is the head of something. Well, I think that most young adults think the way it starts is closest to the top in any profession."

In that case, because he was not committed to the military, the fact he was turned down for the officer training wouldn't have had much effect.
"This I can't tell. I don't know. There's indication by the psychiatrists and others that this probably had a profound effect on him."

What about the buying of the uniform for the officer training?
"This was for officer training. It was issue. He was actually directed to go to the stores and pick up this uniform, so therefore, he had gone through the military set-up of getting kitted-out to go on officer training."

They told him to do this?
"Oh yes. There's no buying of this stuff at all."

Do they give you a card or a letter?
"No, you go through the regular kitting parade with other people and he did that."

So you were pretty sure he was going?
"I would more or less assume that if the army says go get your kit, you're going. Even his tags were made."

That would increase the disappointment to say the least.
"Well this is the point that the psychiatrist brought out. It must have been a very ego-shattering thing to suddenly be told, twenty-four hours before, that you are not going. He also had the medical and the innoculations that were required."

How did they tell him? Did they write a letter?
"No, it was just by word of mouth from the Militia that he wasn't going."

What motivated the buying of the uniform?
"You've got it wrong, the wrong idea, it wasn't buying. After he went through the series of interviews, there was no word from the last one that he hadn't been accepted—and very few people got to this last hurdle as you might call it. Since we didn't hear anything back from them and I gather his unit didn't hear anything back from them, his unit ordered him to pick up the kit."

The Cameron Highlanders?
"That's right."

So everybody is assuming . . .
"Everybody is assuming he's going, including him naturally. At the point that he asked out from school and when he was told he was refused and he wasn't going, there was no way he was going back to the school that he had been excused from."

This was May, about five months before the incidents?
"Yes."

Did he go back to school?
"No he didn't. He went back in September. That term was only another two or three weeks at the very least, and he had been excused from the examinations so there was very little time to go back to school."

The militia training at Petawawa?
"That came much later—at summer training."

But before that, there were two nights a week at the drill hall.
"No. He never did go back to the drill hall because . . . Oh yes. He started. That's when he was going into that summer training business but he had been going to the drill hall one or two nights a week in an attempt to get involved in this officer's training. And he had been put off and put off and put off—the 'come back next week' sort of thing, because we have no word yet. So he went through a period from March onwards which he hadn't had any answers whatsoever from the Militia as to whether he was going to be accepted or not accepted, but he kept being told to go on another board then another board. Now how many boards he went on I don't know."

The initial one you took him to?
"No. That was the final one."

So when was the initial one?
"The initial one was sometime before his eighteenth birthday, in January I think. I took him to the R.M.C. (Royal Military College) one because he asked me to go up with him on that one. That was an interview on what the requirements were for R.M.C. He had this in the back

of his mind that he wanted to become an officer cadet. He wanted to know what subjects he had to take, what his marks had to be and this sort of thing. So they gave a whole briefing on this at the recruitment centre and I was with him at that one. I mentioned at the time that team sports and things like that were still a big requirement in the service and he was not a team sort of person."

So that was the initial thing . . . telling everybody what it was all about—then came the first interview?
"Then he decided he would join one of the local Militia units. He looked around and I think the Cameron Highlanders he liked the best. So therefore he tried to join up with them. They said that they were not able to take on anybody at that time but they advised him to keep coming back."

So this is an officer cadet?
"Yes. Periodically, he kept going back during the school months in the early spring to find out his position and this is how he got on a couple of boards. How many boards he went on I don't know . . . until he got told to go to his final board and after the final board they indicated to him that he should pick up his officer's kit and he was going on the course.

Once he was definitely told he wasn't going on the summer course for officer training, he looked immediately at some other source of military training because he still had at the back of his mind that he should have some military training before applying to the R.M.C."

The final refusal came at the end of May?
"Around about then. And then he had some trouble giving back the uniform. The times he was available didn't coincide with the times that they could accept the stuff back."

Did you complain about this?
"No, because I have been in the Services long enough to know what it's like. There was nothing happening here I hadn't gone through myself. Maybe to somebody who was completely unfamiliar with the military's 'rushed to wait' attitude, it would be something to get upset about."

Was he upset about it?
"He never indicated that he was upset to me. Then again he never seemed to be upset about very much, *ever* . . . very tranquil, happy, outward-looking person."

Do you want to touch on the diary?
"The date of the diary was my sister's birthday. I don't know whether it was written on that day or some time afterwards."

Why would your sister's birthday affect the date on the diary?
"In the first place, she helped him to get it (the typewriter). She brought him around to the stores."

What do you think of the diary?
"When we found it, we were rather startled at some of the things that were said."

You found it and gave it to the police?
"Yes. We had no idea that he had, call it hatred or thoughts, of this manner against any member of the family. It's quite obvious that if this was a genuine outpouring then he had succeeded in baffling everybody in the family and everybody he knew I guess. I don't think resentment in young adults is totally out-of-character. Most people have a rebellion against any sort of authority one time in their life but it takes many forms and it never usually manifests itself except in forms of writing it out."

Do you think at the inquest this privacy aspect was over-emphasized?
"Unfortunately, it was. It was out of line."

(Mary Poulin) "It had nothing to do with that."

(Stuart Poulin) "It was my statement that started that off and I think it was pushed out of context."

(Mary Poulin) "You see, Dr. Cotnam kept insisting that there was a private entrance and it was nothing of the sort. Everybody, including the dog uses that entrance."

(Stuart Poulin) "That's the only way we came into the house."

(Mary Poulin) "It's a matter of going to the basement where Rob was, or coming up into the kitchen."

(Stuart Poulin) "At the inquest, it was made out to be that it was a private entrance and it was his own private telephone and all this sort of thing and this came out too that he corresponded and talked with his friends over the phone for hours for his wargames. That was mentioned because I insisted he couldn't use my telephone and tie it up so long."

He paid for that telephone himself?
"He paid for it. He paid for everything he got himself.'

Where did he get the money?
"He worked when he was younger. He worked delivering catalogues from Eaton's. Then he went into the paper business. He was a very conscientious paperboy. He had an early-morning route and got enough money from that. He had a bicycle. We bought that. He wanted a ten-speed so I said that if he wanted a ten-speed, he would have to go out and earn it. So that's exactly what he did. He went out and earned it and bought himself a bicycle. He earned that taking around the *Globe and Mail*. At one time he had two routes."

(Mary Poulin) "And he never missed. The only time he ever missed was when the paper didn't arrive."

When did he quit the paper route?
(Stuart Poulin) "He quit the paper business because he found that the early mornings were interfering with other things he wanted to do so, therefore, he worked in a pizza parlour and there's where he earned his last money before he got into the Militia. That was his last job."

How did you feel about Dr. Cotnam's closing address?
(Stuart Poulin) "He had all the cards."

(Mary Poulin) "If he says something you don't agree with, you know you can't burst in and say 'look chum . . .'

(Stuart Poulin) "You see, he took what he said were pertinent facts that were brought out at the inquest and he summarized, and in his summary he really stressed the fact about this kid with his own private entrance and his own private room, his own private telephone . . . that he was unsupervised, that nothing interfered with him; that wasn't the case at all. I indicated in my opening statement, as I was the first witness on the stand, that I respected his privacy but it didn't stop me from sometimes going into the room. Why didn't I discover everything that was in that room? Well, there was so much stuff . . . piles of stuff, that a lot of it I wouldn't even recognize. He did have a large pile of magazines on the floor which you tripped over when you came to his section of the basement."

You went in quite regularly?
"I wouldn't say regularly but I went in whenever I was required to go in: if there were things I had to do or check up on some things. It was part of the basement divided off with sheets and curtains. That's all it was but that was because of the women members of the family. There was no solid door or wall or anything else. It was also stated that we insisted he went down there and that was totally untrue. In fact, when my oldest daughter got married, we had a spare bedroom but he wouldn't move

back up again. It was cooler in the summer time and warmer in the winter time. But it was indicated all the way through that we more or less forced him into this situation. But the fact was that his own secure domain was down in the basement. The fact that he had a lot of stuff down there doesn't mean it was a junk room necessarily. It wasn't true."

Do you think the inquest focussed too much on Robert's upbringing?
"Well it did but then again, I could criticize anybody for the way they bring up their children. Under the circumstances we didn't think anything unusual about it—the fact that he wanted to stay down there in a much larger room with a much larger area than he could have possibly had upstairs. He did have hundreds of model airplanes. It was indicated at the inquest in the closing statement that all he did was play wargames and it was only the very last few months that that was his prime object in life. But he spent the majority of his time building model airplanes down there which was time consuming. Anybody who has ever built model airplanes knows how time consuming it is. And he was content to do that. As we said before, he was not inclined to go into game sports."

And he always cleaned the place himself?
(Stuart Poulin) "Not all the time but the majority of the time."

(Mary Poulin) "Yes, quite often he would take the Hoover downstairs and clean the room himself without my even asking. He shared in the family work. He washed the dishes like everybody else."

(Stuart Poulin) "We never thought twice of brushing those curtains back. Robert was an adolescent but he was not girl-crazy. But then again in retrospect, it was obvious that he had another side that was working completely differently to what he was indicating."

(Mary Poulin) "The thing was he didn't smoke, he didn't drink, he didn't take drugs and that you can't say about an awful large number of his age group."

Were the shootings at the high school a copy of the Slobodian case?
(Stuart Poulin) "There's a very good possibility."
(Mary Poulin) "I didn't remember anything about it until it was mentioned afterwards. Even then I only just remembered it."
(Stuart Poulin) "To me it was very clear."

But you do think it was a random thing. You don't think he was shooting at anyone in particular?
"Well, once again, this was a mirror thing. I am sure he did pick up those things from the Brampton shootings. Some of the people in the classroom hardly knew him in sports, socially, or anything. The only time he would ever have seen them would be in the classroom. So I would say it was very very random and it was just an unfortunate series of circumstances."

Robert was a really good student?
"The indication is that he was very good."

Do you know why he would have had problems then? In the diary he mentions something about work piling up on him.
"Yes, this was English. It wasn't one of his best subjects although he was getting over 70 per cent; the subject was responsible for putting down his average."

Was that bad?
"I guess for his image it was. He had to have a high percentage to get into the officer training. This was one of his aims and in Mathematics, at which he was extremely good, I can remember him being very upset

that he didn't get 100 per cent. When you start thinking in grade twelve of not getting 100 per cent that shows you the image he had of himself."

Do you have any suggestions that might help prevent any further incidents of this type?
"There's no way that I could come up with any answer to that at all."

In terms of pornography and things like that?
"My own opinion on pornography is that it teaches people. It's like the teaching methods I use . . . if I want to instruct somebody on how to do something, I use the repetitive method. You can change it but it's still repetitive. If you don't sell the idea to a child one way, then you try another way. So therefore, pornography is put out in vast numbers of books, and is teaching young adolescents, and I don't think it's good. I think pornography is one of those areas where we could have censorship. At present, our society is not willing to do that. The majority of our society is permissive and that means most people can see what they choose. But there has to be a line drawn somewhere. Pornography is something most people seem to enjoy."

You think it played a part in the tragedy?
"Yes, I think it definitely played a part. It gave him driving desires that were beyond his ability to cope with."

In general terms, what do you think the reason was for the tragedy?
"I don't know. I can't even hazard a guess. If as the psychiatrist believes that his self-image was poor then he could see no future. Maybe that was the main reason."

Do you think that could be because of the officer training? Do you think Robert saw his future in the military?

"As I said earlier, I don't know whether he did see his future totally in the army at this particular time. The refusal must have been a shock to his ego. The whole thing was a total shock and surprise."

You said at the inquest that he appeared normal that Monday morning except for the fact that he got up early.
"Yes. The only reason he said he was up earlier is because they were on a shift system at school. (Because of the school repairs, younger students went to class in the morning and older students in the afternoon.) What Robert did was planned at least from the Thursday before when he bought the gun. You don't buy a gun, bring it home and saw off the barrel on the spur of the moment."

I guess you never saw the rifle?
"I didn't see it while it was in the house. Just when the police showed it to me afterwards. There is no doubt in my mind that, with all the evidence, that he had already planned what he was going to do."

Could you take it any farther back than that?
"Well, it depends on that diary and I am still not completely convinced that it was written at that time (April 7)."

Was there anything the previous Thursday or Wednesday that could have indicated what was going to happen?
"There was no indication anywhere at any time, even on the morning that it happened. He had to be totally insane to kill somebody and then come up and ask for his lunch as usual and then watch television. It was two different people we are talking about. Either that or he had been insane for eighteen years."

Do you consider that a possibility?
"No, I don't think so."

Is there a possibility, Mrs. Poulin, that Kim might have been killed after you left the house?
(Mary Poulin) "No, I left the house at 11:30 and the doctor said she had died sometime before 9:30."

Mrs. Poulin, do you ever think of that morning in terms of what could have happened to you had you gone into the room when you asked him about the eye appointment?
(Mary Poulin) "Yes, but I try to put it out of my mind."

Because at that time you weren't really dealing with your son, were you?
(Mary Poulin) "No, I guess not. Looking back on it now I don't think it was my Rob."

Looking back on it, how do you feel about it all? How do you feel about being interviewed now?
(Stuart Poulin) "Uncomfortable."

(Mary Poulin) "It's a nightmare. I keep thinking that one day I will wake up and it won't have happened."

(Stuart Poulin) "It's just an unreal experience. It's happened and that's all. There's nothing you can do to erase it. We are responsible for our own actions."

(Mary Poulin) "I was listening to the radio shows afterwards and lots of people were saying that they thought it was strange that I never invaded Robert's privacy. But I'm not going to spy on any of my children. That's enough to drive anyone crazy. I am not going to bring any of my children up any different."

What about schools—the attendance aspect particularly?
(Stuart Poulin) "We have a system at our school of phoning the student's house. Just the other day we missed a kid that didn't show and when you are dealing with a large number of people it is possible to overlook some of them. The system is not foolproof. There's no way to make it foolproof. Parents let their children go to school

and often both parents are working and there's nobody home and if the kid doesn't come to school, it is then reported immediately at first roll call in the morning. But at 9:10 the phone calls are started back to these various houses. Say if you have ten people missing from school, it could be half an hour before you get to the tenth one, and by that time there might be nobody home so what do you do then?"

A suggestion has been made that the St. Pius shootings could have been avoided with better attendance procedures.
(Stuart Poulin) "Yes, I suppose it could have. Yes, perhaps . . ."
(Mary Poulin) "No. How could it? Let's suppose that Kim's school had phoned home. Her parents would have told the school that she left with her brother that morning. The school authorities would then have gone to her brother to ask where Kim was. The brother would then have mentioned Robert. Then they would have phoned here and I would have gone down to ask Robert if he had seen Kim. He would have said no and that would have been it. I had no reason to suspect him of anything."
(Stuart Poulin) "We never had any reason to be suspicious of him nor had he done anything in eighteen years to make us suspicious."

What about locker searches?
(Stuart Poulin) "Yes, I definitely believe in locker searches. They are allowed in Ontario but it's up to the individual schools. We are allowed to do it in our school but we don't unless there is a very definite suspicion that there is something going on."

What do you think about the psychiatrists' report in view of the amount of time they spent with you?
"I don't think it painted us black."

No, I didn't mean that. How do you feel about these people knowing so much?
"This is a public thing. A lot of people suffered. Not only us. We lost a son, granted, and other people lost a daughter and other people a son, and other people were wounded. I think there were a lot of members on the police force that worked a lot of overtime the first few days to try to figure out what was going on here and there was an awful lot of people involved. It affected a lot of people's lives intimately. My only criticism of the media was that they tried to keep the story alive day by day by repeating things and just rewording them."

What about guns?
"Well, the strange thing about it was that I had a gun in the house with shells and everything. I still don't know whether it would work but it was strange that Robert took the shells and put them around the house as he did, but didn't bother with the gun. I don't understand that. It would take an awful lot of heat to set those shells off. Sure, they could have been dangerous, but it would have taken a lot of heat."

What about the general aspect of gun control?
"I think every gun in the country should be licensed. I think that would make a lot of people who have guns they don't use just say 'The hell with it' and they would turn them in."

EPILOGUE: The End or A Beginning?

Hopefully, there will be some good come out of this.
——H. B. Cotnam, Chief Coroner for the province of Ontario

Ted Ormston left the Crown Attorney's office in Ottawa about four months after the Robert Poulin/Kim Rabot inquest. He didn't like what he saw happening in the city so he packed up his family and his lawbooks and went home to Kirkland Lake. Robert Poulin wasn't the only reason: Ormston had been involved in other violent cases after that. The young lawyer thought Ottawa was showing the first signs of going out of control; that it was heading in the direction of Montreal and Toronto which were themselves becoming more like Detroit and New York. He didn't want to be around when that finally happened, so he left. The fact that he had a solid reputation in Ottawa made the decision difficult, and also reflects how serious Ormston thought the problem was. Now he walks to his law office in Kirkland Lake and has become used to the slower pace of a small community. Ted Ormston says he is glad he's away from the social pressures that had made Robert Poulin snap.

Much of the Ottawa community also wanted to forget about October 27. Letters poured in to newspapers saying the best thing to do was to forget the whole thing, to ignore it. And ironically, that was the kind of attitude that had helped put Robert Poulin in the front pages in the first place.

Robert Poulin had been ignored most of his young life. Being a little fat, average looking, not good in sports, shy, and having problems dealing with girls are not the kind of credentials that society (especially schools) puts a premium on.

A lot of people who had known Robert had called him a loner and then would add, almost as exoneration, that it was by choice. But someone who is a loner by choice doesn't take out an ad in a newspaper pleading for companionship. Robert had made it clear in his unmailed response that all he wanted was a friend, someone who would sit down and perhaps talk over hobbies with him. He was good in school but when it came to human relationships marks meant very little.

The values are in the wrong places. As Drs. Atcheson and Warme put it: "This [preoccupation with fantasy] was cloaked by his efficiency in academic pursuits, by his excellent work record and by his conformity to his religious system. These activities do not demand human intimacy and personal sharing and served to disguise his intense inner loneliness."

Added to that was the privacy that Robert was given at home—privacy he needed to live in the world of fantasy in which he was totally immersed. When he started to enter that world, Robert would find all the supplies he needed as close as the nearest magazine counter or gun store. For someone with an unstable mind everything is already out there waiting, for the price of a few dollars.

Nothing has really changed. That was perhaps the most frustrating part for the investigators. They didn't look into all the areas they did just for the sake of thoroughness. They wanted to show publicly that Robert Poulin was a product of many of the worst things in society generally, things that needed changing. Ormston had obviously decided that the change wouldn't be coming for a while, if ever.

Shortly after the inquest, *Penthouse* magazine ran a pictorial spread on the themes of sadism and masochism. There was a picture of a woman about to have a spiked heel driven into her eye. Ormston had wondered how long it would be before he would be prosecuting a case in which someone was charged with putting another's eye out in that manner. That sort of photography didn't fit anywhere in the broad catch-all term of pornography that the coroner's jury had come up with.

The Poulin case became the basis for a course in Toronto for new coroners. In the same way Dr. Cotnam had, the young coroners questioned the amount of privacy that Robert had been given at home. Stuart and Mary Poulin have said that they believe children should not be subject to someone looking over their shoulders all the time and that they planned to raise their other children no differently.

Furthermore, the psychiatrists themselves left some questions unanswered: what was Robert's life like before the age of twelve, the time when he moved into the basement? Dr. Atcheson hinted at the inquest that certain things happened in Robert's life in those first twelve years which perhaps may have been important in determining the distorted personality that so dramatically shaped events on October 27. However, he would not speculate on them.

On the issues of pornography, gun control, the militia, and the media, things are pretty much the same now as they were before October 27. The schools alone seem to have taken the most immediate action in the wake of the Poulin tragedy. They had identified a new and growing problem and are trying to do something about it.

But others still refuse to admit the problem exists. In fact, on a CKOY Radio hotline show in Ottawa about four months after the inquest, the subject of gun control came up. The host of the program quickly mentioned the Poulin case and then told listeners he didn't want to get

into that subject again. He suggested callers use some other example or subject when they phoned in. *Just ignore it and it will go away.*

On the other hand, Dr. Cotnam has received a number of letters from parents who say they will be taking a closer look at their children after hearing about Robert Poulin. In that way, the coroner said the inquest and the public airing of the facts would prove beneficial—even if they prevented the death of a single person.

But what is the final answer to stopping further tragedies like that of October 27? If there is one thing everyone involved in the case agreed upon, it was the need for education: knowledge of the various factors that helped to shape the character of Robert Poulin. As the pressures in society increase, more potential Robert Poulins will undoubtedly appear in the schools. Qualified people will have to be there to spot them, and as Dr. Warme said, that kind of thing cannot be handled by amateurs.

Pornographic magazines glut store shelves everywhere but we still know very little about the effects of pornography. Dr. Atcheson suggested a total ban until studies could be done to evaluate the danger.

The schools are searching for the answers to these and other questions but admit they don't know why students become violent. Administrators are finally beginning to realize, however, that the schools are equally part of the problems of the society at large, and at least a start has been made in clearly identifying those problems. They now realize it is in their own best interests to do so.

The whole area of training people to use weapons is also something that must be looked at. When it comes to the militia type of training, Bruce Hamill described an entirely different world—one where everyone was supposed to be almost non-thinking. Is training people in the use of firearms generally more of a danger than a measure of safety?

Finally, is the media an accurate mirror of events or is it just trying to keep its ad rates up?

These are questions that require study, questions raised by Robert Poulin in dramatic fashion. Perhaps ironically, the people most qualified to suggest how to stop the next tragedy from occurring are the very ones who tried to figure out Robert Poulin. One thing in common dominates their thinking: education and public knowledge are the only hope we have.

Ottawa, which seemed to have successfully put Robert Poulin out of its mind, was snapped back to reality on Thursday, August 25, 1977. Mark Potvin, one of the students wounded in the tragedy, went before the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board of Ontario to claim compensation as the victim of a crime. His lawyer said that one shotgun pellet remained lodged against a nerve in Potvin's neck, "a potential bomb" that could increase the numbness in the youth's left arm and hand.

The board awarded Potvin $1,500 and told him that if the numbness intensified, he should reappear before the board and ask for further compensation.

RAPE OF A NORMAL MIND

NON-FICTION

- What made a "quiet" "normal" "intelligent" 18 year old boy randomly fire a shotgun into a classroom full of students?
- Attempt to burn down his house?
- Rape and kill a young girl?
- And, finally, commit suicide?
- Why was Poulin's basement room filled with pornographic magazines and devices?
- Why was it so easy for him to buy a twelve-gauge shotgun?
- And why didn't anyone know that Robert Poulin was severely depressed?

Ottawa reporters Cobb and Avery reveal answers to these questions in this fascinating and highly readable report of the controversial Poulin case.

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